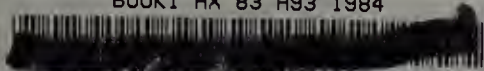


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Prophets of the Left

AMERICAN SOCIALIST
THOUGHT IN THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

Robert Hyfler

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To the memory of my father

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Preface

This book explores over eighty years of American socialist thought. In doing so, I have chosen what I think to be the best and most significant representatives of the tradition. My criteria were the seriousness and consistency of their thought and their first-rank involvement in the socialist movement. By these criteria, for example, I found Louis Fraina a better representative of proto-Communist thought than John Reed, and Norman Thomas a better representative of the post-World War I social democratic tradition than Harry Laidler.

My criteria for inclusion are further explained by the book's title. The Hebrew prophets were a unique breed of social activists. In critiquing their world, they did not lose sight of a vision of an ideal social order. Yet, hardly escapist, they tackled the realities of a given state system, king, or political relationship.

So was it with the secular "prophets" of American socialism. All perceived their visions as part of a movement with concrete goals. None remained aloof from the politics of their day and none ignored the role of inspiration and reason as attributes of power. All had a well-defined theory of the state, and therefore they lived, struggled, and wrote within the organizational forms of American social democracy.

Readers may comment on the lack of attention paid to the various schools of American communism which came after Louis Fraina. This is a reflection of my bias against those who ignore the complex yet vital relationship between democratic norms and social justice.

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge my gratitude to those whose assistance, criticism, and support enabled me to complete this study. This work originated at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where Professor Kenneth M. Dolbeare provided immeasurable help. His careful readings and supportive comments assisted me in accomplishing that which I set out to do. The many suggestions of Professor Bernard Johnpoll helped transform the study into its present form. I am further indebted to Professors Jean Bethke Elshtain and Milton Cantor for their critical readings of the initial text.

I would like to thank the Tamiment Library in New York for the use of the collection and Columbia University for access to the Louis Boudin Papers. Michael Harrington was kind enough to grant me an interview in June 1978. I found our conversation both stimulating and enlightening.

I am indebted to Amelia Rosner and Richard Hyfler for their editorial help. The encouragement and support of my parents was always forthcoming. And the contributions of my wife, Amy Arrick Hyfler, were incalculable. She made numerous suggestions during the course of my work and gave freely of her many research and editorial skills.

Prophets of the Left

1

Introduction: Theory and American Socialism

In 1912, Morris Hillquit, the most prominent theorist of American socialism, could lay claim to the following boast:

The Socialist movement is as wide as the world. In Europe, its power is felt alike in the highly civilized central and northern countries, in autocratic Russia, in apathetic Spain, and in the backward Balkan principalities and kingdoms. The "Red spector" has invaded the Celestial empire, Persia, and Japan; Transvaal and the Australian colonies; the South American republics and the Dominion of Canada. The United States is fast becoming a stronghold of the new doctrine.¹

With the exception of the last sentence, Hillquit's statement is no less true today than it was then. However, the spirit and context of the truth have changed. Red Russia remains autocratic; Spain—having experienced a revolution, a traumatic civil war, and an extended period of reaction—struggles to enter the twentieth century; Middle Eastern oligarchies call their order socialism; and in the "highly civilized central and northern countries" of Europe, socialist governments and parties administer to the needs of an ailing capitalism. The movement, which seventy years ago stood as the antithesis of existing orders, has often merged with them. Lacking the courage to admit its defeats, it has transformed its dreams to conform to its failures.

Socialism in America has been spared this fate. For the most part, history and the forces of American capitalism have not allowed so-

cialists to participate in the maintenance of the system. In a reversal of Yeats's famous lines, the weakest of American socialists "lack[ed] all conviction"; they were quick to alter their dreams and rhetoric to conform to those of the welfare state. The "best," "full of passionate intensity," were often brutally crushed by the state or the cruel betrayals of Soviet communism.

At the same time, America was never immune from any of the many international socialist tendencies. In examining American socialist thought, we will look at what are often peculiar American manifestations of international phenomena. Too often, the failures of the American left have discouraged serious looks at its theory—not to mention comparisons with kindred, albeit more successful, European socialists. However, where Europe had its Kautsky, Luxemburg, and Lenin, America had a Hillquit, Debs, and Fraina.

Imitation, however, was never the full essence of American socialist thought. Morris Hillquit, like other mainstream Marxists of the Second International, did look to Karl Kautsky for direction, but for the most part, socialist thinking in America was symptomatic of parallel rather than reflective development. Daniel De Leon, scion of the Socialist Labor Party and a godparent of the radical left, had a style of analysis and prose all his own, while the reformist Victor Berger claimed only the most casual identification with the formal revisionism of Eduard Bernstein. It is doubtful that Eugene Debs's theoretical readings included much beyond a few classic Marxian texts, and Louis Boudin, the most proficient theorist of the American Marxist left, found his originality favorably received abroad. Louis Fraina, a founder of American communism, anticipated rather than adopted many Leninist assumptions, and there is little connection to be made between the Industrial Workers of the World and various schools of European syndicalism. Hardly a transplanted panacea, American socialism was a sincere and indignant response to American conditions.

An examination of American socialist thought can shed new light on the failure of socialism in America. Previous studies have focused on socialist ideas only as an adjunct to a fuller portrayal of organizational struggles and maneuverings. The American antipathy to "ideology" coupled with the native fetish for empiricism and pragmatism has undoubtedly been a factor. As a result, explanations as to the brief rise and sustained decline of American socialism have sidestepped ideological dimensions of the problem.

Of course, Ira Kipnis casually might chastise socialists for ignoring the dogma of the class struggle, and Daniel Bell asserts that a preoccupation with theoretical absolutes undoubtedly contributed to the left's demise. These, however, are exceptions which prove the rule. Kipnis paints a portrait of compromised socialist bureaucrats cavalierly paying only lip service to ideas, and Bell focuses on theory only to show how dysfunctional it proved to be in corrupting what was a promising reform movement.²

This work will note numerous theoretical factors which contributed to the failure of socialism in America: conservative interpretations of Marx; an overdependence on objective factors; authoritarian misreading of the source of socialist consciousness; and oversimplified approaches to the state and liberal institutions. However, one historical peculiarity of native socialist thinking has proved most tragic.

For socialism to have succeeded in America, the American working class would have had to develop a radical ideology to counter that of capitalism. As we shall see, the socialist movement developed such alternative ways of thinking, yet as is known, they failed to take root among American workers. Basic and profound theoretical differences between mainstream socialists and nonsocialist elements of the working class contributed to this failure. These differences inhibited even the rudimentary beginnings of a dialogue. Those socialists most melioristic in their approach to social problems and most willing to work with accommodationist, practical-minded elements of organized labor were, at the same time, most removed from Gompers and the mainstream of labor philosophically. On the other hand, socialists inside and outside the labor movement who were closest to mainstream labor philosophically were utterly opposed to all compromises with "pure and simple" unionism. Where tactical symmetry existed, philosophical differences abounded; where there was theoretical correspondence, there was a wealth of tactical dissonance.

The nascent unionism of the 1870s and 1880s, of which Samuel Gompers was a product, was born of the realization that only the working class could fully comprehend its problems; therefore, it must be the agent of its own liberation. From a socialist position, particularly one grounded in the theories of Marx, this was a sound beginning for a labor movement. If a socialist consciousness was to proceed from this line of thinking, it would have had to do so by giving content to those desires for self-liberation.

However, a large segment of the socialism which this labor movement encountered was rooted in the statist Marxism of the Second International. Socialists such as De Leon, Hillquit, and Spargo saw the socialist movement as mediating between workers and society, guiding them to a future perhaps of their own making, but not of their own design. In many ways, these dominant segments of American Marxist thought were tinged with middle-class influences and predilections. John Spargo assumed stability and order to be of great importance to the working class, and Morris Hillquit relished the inevitable triumph of a benevolent legal order in the form of the positive state. In this sense, they bore a close affinity to the nonsocialist Progressives of their age who, in Hofstadter's words, "Representing as they did the spirit and desires of the middle-class, . . . stood for a . . . program of economic remedies designed to minimize the dangers from the extreme right and left."³ As Roosevelt sought to restore power to a "responsible middle class," so socialists championed the intellectual leadership of enlightened (Marxist) segments of the bourgeoisie. John Spargo, for one, perceived the socialist movement as an explicit brake on the more nihilistic impulses of the rabble.

To the middle-class socialist, socialism would guarantee an equitable and uncapricious reward for hard work and individual initiative, preserve the family and the best of traditional sex roles, and tame an anarchic economy which threatened personal security and stability.

Yet, the nonsocialist connections of the working-class left were entirely different. The IWW skepticism of the state resembled that of Gompers and labor accommodationists. Debsian rhetoric made strong contact with populist notions of societal renewal and bore some similarity to the tone and passion of Midwest revivalism. Even when working-class radicals (such as Louis Fraina) entered into more formalized Marxist circles, they maintained a romantic vision which was of obvious discomfort to the genteel reformers within the movement. Where bourgeois socialist thought was elitist, working-class socialism was often democratic to an extreme. While the dominant strains of middle-class socialism viewed the state as either inherently progressive or easily adaptable to their ends, the working-class activist, from Gompers to Haywood to Debs, looked upon the state with ambivalence, suspicion, and disdain.

The socialism of Debs and Haywood was therefore an outgrowth of American labor thinking. However, it had little tolerance for what it

had broken with and transcended. Although moderate socialists such as Hillquit and Berger perceived Gompers and the AFL as having yet to learn the truths of socialism, this was not the perception of the working-class left. To Debs and the Wobblies, all workers had a basic potential for understanding the root evil of capitalism and an implicit grasp of the socialist vision. In their estimation, Gompers and his cohorts lacked not the ability to construct a socialist critique of society but a belief in the possibility and immediacy of workers achieving power. Debs and the Wobblies viewed the Federation's attachment to craft unionism as indicative, more of cowardice than anything else. The mainstream Marxist of the Socialist Party optimistically waited for labor to see the light; De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party attempted aggressively to show the working class that light; the working-class left, however, assumed the leadership of organized labor had seen the light and had rejected it in favor of an accommodationist stance.

As a result, large portions of the working class never came in contact with a socialism adaptive to their basic perspective. The socialism of Hillquit appeared too statist and paternalistic and that of De Leon too authoritarian. The inability of Gompers and the proletarian left to meet on common political ground disrupted the development of an indigenous working-class socialist consciousness. Governmental repression sealed the fate of the working-class left.

One cannot therefore underestimate the importance of repression. It could be argued rather forcefully that socialism never took hold in this country because it was not allowed to do so. That is not to say that a large segment of the American working class was at any time socialist, but that the working class of this country was not allowed to become socialist, as the most promising tendencies of socialist thought were prevented from developing, maturing, and continuing their dialogue with the American working class.

Of course, had a Debsian or IWW brand of socialism taken root in the working class, it is still difficult to say that it would have succeeded. It is likely, however, that the defeat of socialism, were it to have occurred, would have been qualitatively different. A more firmly implanted socialist movement might not have been so easily expelled from American political life, and its existence would have been so much more obvious to later generations. Repression would have appeared as less of the anomaly that it now does and would not have been so easily written off by liberal apologists. Even more likely, a large, relatively

entrenched socialist movement might have necessitated an American version of the European compromise, in which the programmatic reality of socialism is betrayed while an exaltation of the socialist vision remains.

American socialist theory did not arise in a vacuum. It was the product of America and the larger world, and it thrived within a number of diverse organizational forms. Most prominent among them was the Socialist Party of America.⁴ The Socialist Party was formed in July 1901. It represented the synthesis of an East Coast Marxism, heavily influenced by European social democracy, with more native, though not necessarily un-Marxist, brands of socialism. Given the spirit of coalition that marked its founding, it attracted other, more diverse strains of socialism as well. In the next twenty years, this party mounted the most serious socialist challenge to capitalism in America to date. Its legacy has both inspired and haunted the American left ever since.⁵ Organizationally, it traces at least half its lineage to the Socialist Labor Party.

Formed in 1877, the Socialist Labor Party spent the first decade and a half of its existence embroiled in a series of confused internal battles between Lassalleans and Marxists over the respective merits of political versus economic agitation. However, even once the Marxists gained control of the party, the political tactic championed by the Lassalleans won out. In part, this was a result of the brief surge of anarchism during the 1880s which impressed the Lassalleans with the need for militancy but encouraged the Marxists to place a distance between themselves and those identified with the "propaganda of the deed." For if the short-lived, yet surprising, successes of the anarchists had educated the Lassalleans in the benefits of trade union activity, the adverse reaction of nonsocialist America to the anarchist tactic had convinced many Marxists of the virtues of not straying too far from "respectable" methods. When Daniel De Leon joined the party in 1890, both the political actionists and partisans of trade union activity were prepared to put the feuds of the past decades behind them.⁶

De Leon was a prized acquisition for the SLP. Although not quite a full-blooded Yankee, the West Indies-born, Dutch-educated attorney and college lecturer was at least more comfortable on the American scene than were the expatriate German socialists who had dominated the party in its formative years. A newly converted Marxist, whose prose never adapted itself to the Marxist idiom, De Leon was bent on

creating an active socialist presence on both the economic and political fields. "The organization of the working class must be both economic and political," he wrote. "The capitalist is organized on both lines. You must attack him on both."⁷

The times seemed right for socialism in the trade unions. In 1888, a group of Jewish socialists, Morris Hillquit among them, had been instrumental in establishing the United Hebrew Trades. This organization lay the groundwork for the successful needle trades unions that were to develop over the next three decades.⁸ The leaders of the Jewish socialists were an interesting lot. Although alienated from the mainstream of American life by their ethnicity and immigrant status, many of them hailed from the cosmopolitan urban centers of Russia and Eastern Europe and were forced to return to a Yiddish idiom in order to approach the Jewish proletariat. Their success was noteworthy. Abraham Cahan's *Jewish Daily Forward* (which was to break with the socialists in support of FDR during the Thirties) was the single greatest intellectual influence on the consciousness of American Jews. Hillquit's socialism—with its accent on political action and a labor militancy tempered by a willingness to compromise—has undoubtedly shaped the temper of New York unionism to this day. In later years, social democratic union leaders would emerge not only in the needle trades but also among teachers and municipal workers.⁹

In 1896, the SLP created the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, ostensibly to organize the unorganized. However, when it appeared obvious that the new organization was not adverse to recruiting from the ranks of the AFL, the cry of "dual unionism" rose up from within the older labor organization. Socialists such as Hillquit, with close ties to established unions, balked as well. As the STLA floundered, the battle within the SLP intensified, always compounded by De Leon's inability to tolerate opposition to his autocratic rule. Finally (after a series of often comical confrontations and court suits), a large segment of the party, under the leadership of Hillquit, withdrew in anticipation of uniting with the Social Democratic Party.

The Social Democratic Party was itself an outgrowth of a feud that developed between political actionists and utopians wishing to colonize a Western state, and thereby begin, state by state, the transformation of the United States into a cooperative commonwealth. The lesson that all later socialists would learn from this and all other intentionalist experiments is that the old order cannot be fled from; it must

be either eradicated, transcended, or incorporated into the new. Hillquit would observe that "the time of Robinson Crusoes, individual or social, has passed."¹⁰ Even at their most conservative, later American socialists would seek solutions that went beyond isolated experiments and which sought to confront social evils rather than to create a physical separation from them.

The leaders of the Social Democratic Party, Berger and Debs, were an odd pair who would later represent opposite poles of the Socialist Party. Born and educated in Austria, Berger emigrated to the United States in 1878, and by 1893 had gone through the Socialist Labor Party of Milwaukee and had formed his own Social Democratic Society with close ties to the city's labor unions. Berger was to become the major proponent of a "step-at-a-time" socialism (which advocated reform measures and municipal ownership as a means toward the introduction of socialism). Debs, a founder and president of the American Railway Union, married himself to the socialist movement following his imprisonment for defying a government injunction during the Pullman strike of 1894. He would consistently flirt with the more radical variants of the socialist vision.

The Pullman strike, an early test of industrial unionism, had two rather contradictory effects on the American labor movement. To a minority of labor leaders, Debs among them, it pointed to the virtue of industrial organization, the need for unity and militancy, and the imperative to neutralize the state in the battle between labor and capital. However, to Gompers and the AFL leadership, the events of 1894 had a different significance entirely, proving the permanency of capitalism and the futility of an overly militant unionism.¹¹

From the beginning, then, the Socialist Party was composed of some rather odd bedfellows. One can divide the party into a right, center, and left and say that a center-left coalition dominated the party in its early years and was opposed by a small right wing centered upon Berger. After 1905, with the formation of the IWW, the reappearance of the controversial questions of dual unionism and extralegal action inspired the formation of a center-right coalition. The infighting eventually led to the passing of a convention resolution condemning direct action and sabotage, and the expulsion of the Wobbly leader, William Haywood, from the party's National Executive Committee.¹²

However, although these categories adequately reflect the shifting tactical alliances that developed within the party during this period, they

obscure the various theoretical differences that existed both between and within the various factions. There was no real continuum of thought within the party; persons and groups tactically close were often distant in terms of theory.

The center found its leader in Morris Hillquit, a moderate yet doctrinaire Marxist who would maintain his prominence within party affairs for over three decades. An able lawyer and tactician, Hillquit had a knack for effecting compromises. John Spargo, a popular exponent of the center brand of American Marxism, combined his interpretation of Marx with a reverence for the English liberal tradition. He would play a leading role in many progressive movements of the period and would leave the party to support the American war effort during World War I. If any single position was characteristic of the center, it was an unflinching belief in the unconscious economic forces which make the advent of socialism all but inevitable.

The party's right was an odd amalgam of Christian socialists, utopians, thinly veiled populists, and municipal reformers. It found its most able spokesman in Berger who, while sharing the evolutionary hopes of the center, had not its unqualified faith in either Marx or economic forces. The Milwaukee socialist had much less trouble justifying the practical reforms that all but the most extreme elements of the party's left tended to support. At the same time, he had the gadfly's prerogative of embracing a more militant tactic when the situation warranted it. The positive aspects of Berger's voluntarism were unfortunately negated by his rather narrow perspective, rooted as it was in middle-class pretensions and bigotries.

A radical working-class left emerged as a reaction to both an authoritarian leftism—exemplified in the writings of Daniel De Leon—and the accommodationism of AFL unionism. While De Leon failed to perceive the need for the self-education which must complement the self-liberation of the working class, Gompers and the AFL asserted this need but rejected the possibility of overcoming a repressive capitalist order.

Debsian socialism was the most promising of left socialist perspectives. It balanced an appreciation of the potential of democratic institutions with an understanding of the need for militant struggle on all fronts. The radical working-class left was a major victim of Wilsonian repression. Its demise was a major setback, both organizationally and theoretically, for American socialism.

The Socialist Party left further claimed romantic men of letters such as Jack London and John Reed, scholarly Marxists such as Louis Boudin, and self-educated revolutionaries such as Louis Fraina. After the expulsion of Haywood from the party's National Executive Committee, Boudin and Fraina emerged as consistent spokesmen for the left and sought to infuse the party with a new spirit of militancy and voluntarism to counter the staid determinism of socialist moderates.

Fraina, imbued with the quasi-religious fervor of the revolutionary romantic, waged a holy war against party moderates in the name of direct action and immediate revolution. Ironically, despite the radicalization of the moderate position following American entry into the war and the Russian Revolution, the intraparty struggle intensified to the point of schism. However, the Communist Party, which emerged from that chaotic period, rather quickly came to reflect the authoritarian synchophancy of Zinoviev's Third International and not the left socialism of Fraina.

Separated from its revolutionary elements, the Socialist Party of the 1920s sought relevancy in coalition with populists and Progressives. But such coalitions fizzled, and by the end of the decade, Norman Thomas emerged as the authoritative voice of the non-Communist left. Thomas's ascension to socialist leadership signaled the further alienation of the movement from a working-class base and the assimilation of its thought into that of mainstream reformism. Thomas's own class position aided in this transition. Having grown up in the same small town as Harding and studied under Wilson at Princeton, and being accustomed to the deference and respect shown men of the cloth, he had neither qualms nor difficulties in negotiating with persons of authority. In his years as a public spokesman for socialism, he made numerous calls on men of power in support of his causes.

Albeit thoroughly reformist, Thomas's socialism brought a new spirit of voluntarism to the American left. At the same time, he subordinated the totality of the socialist vision to support for individual causes and positions. Within the Socialist Party, Thomas occupied a position between a Marxist "old guard," led by Hillquit until his death in 1933, and a vaguely Debsian left wing, in some ways the remnants of an earlier left (more easily described as fellow travelers of the various disaffected Leninisms that dotted the political landscape of the Thirties). Although tactically aligned with the party's left, Thomas shared neither its revolutionary ardor nor Marxist analysis. Indeed, as will be

seen, the consistency with which he embraced radical positions obscured his conservative reasons for doing so.

Although the Thirties and Forties brought a certain degree of organizational success to the left, most notably the formation and growth of the CIO and the growth of Communist influence, they did not bring comparative developments in American socialist thinking. The Communist movements—loyalists and pretenders included—imported their thinking from abroad, and under Thomas's leadership socialists were doers and participators, not thinkers. As the cold war and the revival of state repression obliterated radical structures and old political ties, socialist thinking remained in decline and without roots. The student left which emerged in the 1960s was, in Daniel Bell's words, "sons without fathers . . . nihilists without memory."¹³

Yet finally, despite a wishful teleology, the writings of Michael Harrington introduce the basis for a new socialist literature in America. His socialism is worth considering for two reasons. First, in the personality-oriented milieu of American politics, there emerges in each generation a recognized spokesman for American socialism. The process by which this occurs involves both internal selection by the left and media anointment. For whatever reasons, not least of which being his tireless service to the socialist cause and his abilities as a prolific and informed writer and organizer, Harrington has inherited a role previously played by Thomas and Debs.

Second, Harrington represents both continuity and change within the socialist tradition. In his writings, we can see Hillquit's moderating faith in the historical process as well as Thomas's brand of reformism. At the same time, he reintroduces lost categories and approaches. While hardly a radical socialist, Harrington does exhibit an ambivalence toward the state which has been absent in social democratic circles for many years. With integrity, and a refreshing degree of independence, he confronts American problems within the context of a sophisticated Marxist paradigm. Harrington presents to the left a tactic, an agenda for the coming decades which can be analyzed, critiqued, and transcended.

NOTES

1. Morris Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up* (New York: Fly, 1912), p. iii.
2. See Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912* (West-

port, Conn.: Greenwood, 1968); and Daniel Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967).

3. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Knopf, 1974), p. 236.

4. Although it is a somewhat arbitrary distinction, this work will focus mainly on American socialists with some organizational affiliation.

5. For a history of the American socialist movement up to the formation of the Socialist Party, see Howard Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953). David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1967), is useful for the period after 1900; Kipnis, *American Socialist Movement*, and James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America: 1912–1925* (New York: Vintage, 1969), offer conflicting interpretations of the Socialist Party's decline during the first quarter of this century; and the two most inclusive surveys of American socialism are found in Bell, *Marxian Socialism*, and Milton Cantor, *The Divided Left: American Radicalism 1900–1975* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

6. See Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906), pp. 213–20 passim.

7. Daniel De Leon, *Reform or Revolution* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1943), p. 32.

8. See Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), pp. 15–34 passim.

9. See Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 287–359 passim for the rise and decline of the Jewish left.

10. Hillquit, *History*, p. 140.

11. Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, 4 vols. (New York: International, 1975), 2:277.

12. Kipnis, *American Socialist Movement*, is most useful in detailing these shifting party alliances.

13. Bell, *Marxian Socialism*, p. xii.

2

The Conservative Uses of Marx: Hillquit, Spargo, and Berger

Mainstream American Marxists, mixing an odd blend of Darwinian theory, strict Marxist determinism, and old-fashioned American optimism, developed a model of social change in which history evolves through the often unconscious and counterconscious activity of individuals and economic forces. They saw the need for conscious radical activity as arguable and perceived the most active agents of social change to be the very institutions and persons the socialists sought to replace. They understood socialism to be the next step in a natural process of change. The role of the socialist was to legitimize that which was inevitable, most natural, and most beneficial. At the hands of moderate socialists, Marxism was stripped of its teleological, not to mention eschatological elements. Morris Hillquit would argue that "it is improvement not perfection for which we are striving, and our contemporary social organization is capable of improvement just as all societies of the past were."¹

Therefore, while the historian Ira Kipnis was correct in asserting that with few exceptions, American socialists "gave lip service to the philosophy of Marx and Engels," he should have emphasized that the writings of these theorists were often used for some rather conservative purposes.² Popularizers of American Marxism such as Morris Hillquit, John Spargo, and Victor Berger used Marxism to advocate an "evolutionary" rather than "revolutionary" tactic and to warn against the premature introduction of socialism. In the process, they mythol-

ogized the early stages of capitalism. Spargo, whose avowed aim was to popularize the "evolutionary method of Marxian socialism,"³ was even to assert that among the virtues of the socialist movement was its capacity for saving society from anarchism and the nihilistic impulses of the working class by civilizing and channeling underclass consciousness for constructive purposes.⁴

There was more than a certain looseness in the usage of the word *socialism*. It was perceived as both a tendency in the economic and social ordering of society—many of whose elements were already to be found in capitalism—and, at the same time, an absolute ideal which called for the conscious work of avowed socialists. Hillquit would therefore point to trusts and government-controlled enterprises as proof that "we are at least ankle-deep in Socialism already,"⁵ while the same economic structures being "in no sense installments of the socialist cooperative commonwealth."⁶ Part of this confusion resulted from a tension in mainstream American Marxist thinking, which hesitated to link the historical and technological factors leading to socialism with conscious human activity. By overexaggerating the former, these socialists made the latter relatively superfluous. For although they insisted that their version of economic determinism did "not involve belief in man's helplessness to change conditions"⁷ and was in no sense "political Calvinism,"⁸ they placed an unusually heavy emphasis on the unconscious factors of social change and a gradualist and progressive interpretation of history which circumscribed the need for activism.

To Spargo, history was nothing short of the ever progressive improvement of mankind, with each historical epoch an unequivocal advance. As "cruel revolting and vile" as slavery might appear, he wrote, "it still was a step forward, a distinct advance upon the older custom of cannibalism and wholesale slaughter."⁹ He viewed capitalism as a similar improvement, whose inevitable advent was understood in gradual and consensual terms.

The triumph of the new system of capitalist production with its far greater efficiency arising from associated production upon a plan of specialized division of labor, was therefore but a question of time. The class of wage workers then gradually increased in numbers. As men found that they were unable to compete with the new methods, they accepted the inevitable and adopted themselves for the new conditions.¹⁰

This contrasts, of course, with the analysis offered by Marx in the first volume of *Capital*. In Marx, that which seems gradual over the course of decades and centuries is marked by brutality and suffering in the day-to-day lives of ordinary people.

The spoilage of the church's property, the fraudulent adulation of the state domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism, were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation.¹¹

However, Marxists such as Hillquit, Spargo, and Berger believed that "the present system of industry has not been consciously planned and devised by cunning capitalist minds."¹² They rejected the notion that while no single social architect existed, the isolated events which combined to create capitalism were, more often than not, the conscious actions of men who understood the need for social controls over a propertyless underclass.

Hillquit maintained that the movement toward socialism takes place on different fronts, the participants being either "conscious or unconscious of their activity."¹³ Spargo understood change as the result of an even more deterministic process in which "hopes for the future rest, not upon the genius of some utopia builder" but are realized only as a result of "economic necessity."¹⁴ Men move through the maze of history with all but one path closed to them, the timing of their movements always determined by economic stimuli.

It is interesting that Spargo often used the epithet *utopian* as a weapon to guard his left flank rather than his right. The word was used as a slur upon suggestions for change which conflicted with his evolutionary consensual model (such as "communistic" forms of organization and social reforms which shocked his proper middle-class sensibility). Hence, Marx "lapsed at times into the utopian habit of predicting the sudden transformation of society,"¹⁵ and the hostility of certain socialists to the legal institution of marriage was seen as a "remnant of the old utopian spirit."¹⁶ Not unlike a Burke, Spargo had a natural repugnance for change which was neither discernible in, nor made imperative by, existing social relations.

Spargo's socialism was infused with a building-block notion of change, very gradual and thoroughly consensual. It was a sharp with-

drawal from the militant and at times desperate socialism of other segments of the movement. However, what he and the equally moderate Hillquit retained from an earlier Marxism was a rigid sense of inevitability, a determinism infused with the language and aura of scientific truth. As such, their socialism did not place tremendous stock in an ethical appeal to the human will. In this sense, Victor Berger was closer to the moderate elements of the European left.

The early years of the Socialist Party of America coincided with the great debate in European socialist circles between "revisionist" and "orthodox" Marxists. The latter group, most often identified with the writings and leadership of Karl Kautsky, defended a rather rigid and mechanistic interpretation of Marx.¹⁷ While removed from the more Hegelianized spirit of Marx's writings, these later Marxists retained—in their fashion—some sense of the dialectic and used it to construct a conflict theory of history and class struggle. It was the understanding of the "orthodox" Marxist that whereas socialized production under capitalism would point out the possibility of a society based on cooperation, the inability of capitalism to deal with its problems would illustrate the necessity for such a change.

Eduard Bernstein was the first to offer a systematic rebuttal to the orthodox position from within the socialist movement, and he is considered the founder of Marxist revisionism. Although not a Kantian in any strict sense of the term,¹⁸ Bernstein stated that

Social Democracy requires a Kant who should judge the received opinion and examine it critically with deep acuteness, who should show where its apparent materialism is the highest—and therefore the most easily misleading—ideology, and warn it that the contempt of the ideal, the magnifying of material factors until they become omnipotent forces of evolution, is a self-deception, which has been and will be exposed as such at every opportunity by the action of those who proclaim it.¹⁹

Bernstein sought to substitute an ethical idealism as the driving force of the socialist movement and to replace a materialist and deterministic conception of history, which he found indefensible given a capitalist order capable of adaptation and reform. Furthermore, in rejecting the dialectical method, Bernstein gave new meaning to the evolutionary understanding of history popularized by such orthodox Marxists as Kautsky.

To many Marxists, it was possible that history would proceed on an evolutionary course to socialism. However, by *evolutionary* they meant that the pace of history would be gradual, that capitalism must be allowed to develop and decay, that the class struggle must be allowed to intensify. At some point, however, a qualitative break with the past would occur. In contrast, Bernstein's nondialectical notion of evolution led him to perceive socialism as the natural outgrowth of the processes of capitalist development. He viewed socialism as the "legitimate heir" of liberalism, "not only in chronological sequence, but also in its spiritual qualities."²⁰ The clash of opposing economic forces was minimized; violence was ruled out in favor of parliamentary reform; and all consideration of the dictatorship of the proletariat was "only to be looked upon as a reversion, as political atavism."²¹ It was Bernstein's faith in liberal institutions that lay at the heart of his break with Marx. As George Lichtheim notes, "Bernstein's critique of Marx amounted to saying that the freedom available to men under present day conditions was already sufficient to enable them to decide their future."²²

Strictly speaking, America did not have any great disciple of Bernstein. It did, however, have a great revisionist in the person of Victor Berger, the socialist "boss" of Milwaukee. While often accused of being a "Bernsteinian," and while he himself proclaimed, "I am rather proud of being called the American Bernstein,"²³ Berger's identification with his German counterpart was similar to Bernstein's own identification with Kant.²⁴

The pragmatic, less-than-theoretical Berger was attracted to Bernstein's willingness to open up the movement to new ideas and ways of thinking. "Our Bernsteinism," he wrote, "which by the way is not 'Bernsteinism' at all . . . means constant fight."²⁵ To Berger, revisionism was "Marxism thawed out and set running."²⁶ Unlike Bernstein, Berger made no great fetish of liberal institutions. "Wicked opportunists as we are—we are even willing to fight for it with rifles if necessary—provided the time is opportune and we have the rifles."²⁷ Berger's writings did not fit neatly into any preconceived theoretical categories.

Berger's understanding of the dynamics of social change in America was hardly consensual. On the one hand, an open electoral system in America made the ballot, "if used rightly, . . . a far more powerful weapon in this country than in any other." On the other hand, the lack

of a feudal tradition in America facilitated the rise of a brutal economic order. "If anything, capitalism here is more reckless of human life, and more brutal than in most of the old countries."²⁸

Berger focused on the conflict between the promise of participatory government as it exists in the American political tradition and the reality of capitalist oppression, which manifested itself in the experience of American labor during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While he advocated giving a "full and fair trial" to the ballot as a means of implementing change,²⁹ he nevertheless asserted that the power of the ballot must be backed by an equal degree of force. "I would like to see a systematic way of arming the people," he wrote, "not for the sake of 'revolution' but for the sake of peace and progress."³⁰ This master of electoral politics, who built a machine that dominated Milwaukee for over a quarter of a century and who asserted that "it is foolish to expect any results from riots and dynamite,"³¹ was nevertheless a vigorous advocate of an armed proletariat. "If we want to save democracy," he argued, "we must make it possible for democracy to defend itself."³²

In Berger's writing, voluntarism mixed freely with determinism, and all roads led to an advocacy of a step-at-a-time, reformist socialism. Berger justified reforms as "installments," "stepping stones," and "indispensable transitions" to socialism.³³ The change would not come by itself but would have to be preceded by the "revolutionizing of minds." The working class must be prepared for socialism, and it was Berger's estimation that no "civilized country" possessed a proletariat "ripe for socialism."³⁴ The education of the masses would be carried out by a "few people . . . who care about the idea and who feel a resistless impulse toward its propagation."³⁵

Yet, at the same time, Berger warned, men cannot "make history" but must rather place themselves "in line with the march of civilization." The genius of those within the socialist movement is "that we have realized that the economical development of the present capitalist system leads toward socialist production." Berger concluded that "that which comes by necessity is for that very reason possible without further question."³⁶ If voluntarism and idealism were invoked to argue for a "working program" and a pragmatic, reformist strategy, historical materialism was used to dampen the militancy of the movement's left.

It is clear that of all the unconscious human forces making for socialism, the two most important to the moderate American Marxists

were capitalists and their creation, the modern state. Indeed, elite behavior was seen as more counterconscious than unconscious. Measures used by capitalists and their political allies to maintain the present economic order were themselves seen as moving society deeper and deeper into socialism.

Hillquit saw a twofold irony in capitalist development. First, in the name of individuality, capitalism created an economic order in which individuality itself had become a "mark of economic immaturity."³⁷ In the modern era, "the modern machine is a social tool, the modern factory is a social workshop, the modern workingman is a social servant and the modern products are social products."³⁸

Second, the capitalist class, in an effort to control an increasingly socialized working class, created an instrument of coercion known as the state. Yet, out of fear of the working class, capitalists transformed the state into an agency of social reform. Hillquit, then, did not deny the class nature of the state under capitalism. However, he did suggest a much shorter period in which the state is actively used as a repressive tool and pointed to a not-distant future in which the state would be a positive instrument of human emancipation.

In Hillquit's relatively consensual model, there is little need for coercive power in the early periods of capitalism. He held to a mythology which saw capitalism, prior to its modern manifestations, as going hand in hand with a noninterventionist state and an acquiescent working class. Only in an advanced era must capitalists, previously the benefactors of society, maintain their privileged position through a combination of repression and social reform. The introduction of reforms signals the impending transformation of the state to an organ for the social betterment of mankind.

Hillquit saw the state as a reflection of man's social development, the evolution of mankind "from an aggregation of loosely connected social units to the present state of society, in which the entire globe is divided politically into a very small number of governments compactly and closely organized."³⁹ If the state and its citizenry had once been in conflict, that day was surely about to pass. The state had evolved into an indispensable tool for the attainment of human needs. It stood as the guardian and preserver of all past good as well as the hope for the present and future. "The state represents the collective mind and attainment of all past generations, but also the collective intellect, will, and powers of its present living, feeling and thinking members."⁴⁰

Social legislation, even when implemented to defuse working-class

discontent, was to Hillquit a clear indication that the gap between the state and society was diminishing. Of importance was not the conscious motives of elites but the "symptomatic significance" of legislation. It marked "a growing change in the popular conception of the office of legislation—the approach of a new legal system expressive of a new social era."⁴¹

Originally, Hillquit believed, the state was created—and its power extended—to maintain the existing order. However, in response to the rise of the political and economic organization of the working class, the state had become, often for the most sinister of reasons, "an instrument of economic and social reform."⁴² The introduction of reform signals that the state has risen above the class struggle and is now a "most potent instrument for the modification and ultimate abolition of the capitalist class rule."⁴³ Each class or group of citizens must now try to capture, or at least influence, the state machinery for its own purposes.⁴⁴ Eventually the state, rather than working to preserve the status quo, assumes "the very important mission of paving the way for the transition from present conditions to socialism."⁴⁵ Hillquit saw the state as being transformed from a negative instrument of class domination, to a neutral mechanism loyal to those who assert the greatest degree of influence and power, to a positive force for social change. This process takes place over a rather short period.

If Hillquit—coming from a German socialist tradition heavily influenced by Hegel—viewed the state as man's means of social expression, Spargo—whose Marxism was tempered by his admiration of the liberal tradition—saw it as the last protection of individuals in a collectivist age.⁴⁶ For Hillquit, the state was both natural and necessary; to many a more radical socialist, the state was neither natural nor necessary; but to the liberal Spargo, the state was unnatural yet quite necessary.

It is an irony of liberalism that its understanding of the role of the state has its roots in that most authoritarian of social theorists—Thomas Hobbes. Within the Hobbesian framework, man is forced into society out of insecurity and fear of death. Society is never an end or good in itself; it is a means by which people establish a safe context in which to pursue their desires and their own conceptions of the good life. Since only the private sphere is in any way natural, and all that is public is inherently and always artificial, the public sphere, once conceived as necessary, has no logical limit. An encroachment into one area of an

individual's life is no different in any way from an encroachment into another area. From a position which posits an essentially private nature of man, Hobbes arrives at a public order with no logical bounds. If all is inherently private, then all is potentially public.

Yet, if the Leviathan is clearly authoritarian, the classical liberal state, whose rationale evolved from Hobbes, was an order decidedly more tolerant. As the coercive power of the state was replaced by that of the market, social control became the function of economic processes within the private sphere. To a certain degree (never as great as its apologists would have us believe), the liberal state receded from the social scene. Only in periods of heightened confrontation between groups and classes does the need for a public effort in support of the existing order arise. The Leviathan would then be resurrected once more.

Spargo's socialism was a mixture of Hobbesian logic and his own understanding of Marx.⁴⁷ To the extent that he viewed man as a social creature, the state, in his analysis, conforms to the role ascribed to it by socialists like Hillquit. But to the extent that he viewed man as egoistic, the state comes to protect man's pursuit of private dreams and to end the chaos of the class struggle which deflects human energy from that pursuit.

Spargo felt that "human nature is nothing more than the fundamental instinct of self-preservation which man enjoys in common with lower animals."⁴⁸ However, the possibility for the elimination of scarcity mitigates this egoism and allows for cooperation, which is a reflection of man's other, more social, side. "Life is an oscillation between these two motives."⁴⁹ Only in some distant epoch that might follow socialism would people view much of their own self-interest and the common good as synonymous.⁵⁰

Spargo's individuals, half social, half egoistic, are thrust into a collectivized world. Two options are open to them. One, the capitalist alternative, is geared to enhance the individuality of the few at the expense of the many. Spargo would reject this option, not only out of fairness, but because of the class warfare, social upheaval, and anarchy it would bring.

The second alternative—socialism—seeks to meet man's social needs and preserve some security for the private sphere through cooperation and mutually agreed-upon restrictions. "Liberty," wrote Spargo, in words ripe with Hobbesian implications, "has progressed rapidly where social supremacy has been most firmly established."⁵¹ Under social-

ism, he asserted, one can envision a "wide extension of private property."⁵² Spargo assured his readers that Marx and Engels "had no desire to forbid private initiative or thrift, but only a passionate desire to destroy class rule and privilege."⁵³ In John Spargo, we see a genteel middle-class strain of American socialism that has survived well into the middle of this century. As will be seen, it found a more popular and equally eloquent spokesperson in Norman Thomas.

Whether as a manifestation of man's social nature (as envisioned by Hillquit) or as a benevolent Leviathan protecting the private sphere by restricting it (as viewed by Spargo), mainstream American Marxists endowed the state with a special virtue, its every move a step toward the creation of the cooperative commonwealth. Furthermore, by holding to a vision of a positive state, mainstream American Marxists anticipated key elements of a later welfare state liberalism even as they alienated themselves from large segments of the working class. For as we will find, the antipathy toward the state of both labor radicals and accommodationists was a common thread of underclass thinking, an inclination which created a real class division within reform ranks.

The notion of "class" is a most elusive concept for socialists. Marx's third volume of *Capital* broke off just as his discussion of class began. The few paragraphs available to us offer little insight except to say that an analysis of classes in capitalist society must go beyond the two categories of capitalists and wage earners. Marx complained that in Britain, where the economic structure is "most highly and classically developed, middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere."⁵⁴

Needless to say, the problem of how to deal with the "middle classes" has bewildered Marx's disciples as well. In his popular exposition of socialist principles, *Socialism Summed Up*, Hillquit began his discussion of class by stating:

It is not contended that the entire population is definitely divided into the two classes mentioned. There are, of course, the more or less indefinite or undefinable economic groups, generally designated as the "middle class" with all shades of special interest, but the main factors . . . are clearly represented by the two most pronounced type of classes, the capitalist and the wage earners.⁵⁵

As this statement suggests, American Marxists often placed the middle classes outside of history. This was difficult for some, given their own

class background. An alternative position was to somehow collapse these classes into the two more predominant ones. Attorney Hillquit described people in the professions as "intellectual proletarians"⁵⁶ and predicted that small businessmen would have to either take their place in the ranks of the working class or in the "service of the trusts."⁵⁷

Great stress was placed on the contributions of middle-class people to the socialist movement. There were reminders that "the founders of theoretical socialism . . . and the leaders of the socialist movement in all countries recruit themselves principally from among this class."⁵⁸ Although described as "supplying capitalism with its apologists," the professional classes are further seen as "alert in perceiving every coming social change and whenever a new class enters upon a promising campaign to displace the old order, the professionals desert their former patrons in large numbers and place themselves at the head of the new movement."⁵⁹

It was only in the more working-class variants of American socialism that sustained skepticism of the middle classes appeared. Mainstream Marxists looked upon the middle classes in a favorable light and reserved their enmity for the "slum proletarians" who could "only seldom be relied on to rally to the virile battle of socialism."⁶⁰

Berger often adopted the more reformist arguments of "centrists" such as Hillquit and Spargo and carried them to their most conservative conclusions. He believed it was "false consciousness to ignore a very large class of people who although 'property holders' are yet exploited and fighting a very desperate fight."⁶¹ Such a coalition, he argued, would make for the establishment of "a great deal of socialism in our time."⁶² Basically, he believed that the organization of the trust showed socialists "how they must do it." In the trust, the capitalist class was viewed as "already expropriated" to a great extent since trust owners have lost control over the management of the productive process and are merely "profit receivers."⁶³

This exaltation of the middle classes shows the tremendous difficulty many American socialists had in dealing with the whole notion of class struggle. Gronlund's *Cooperative Commonwealth*, one of the earliest and most popular American expositions of socialism, curiously ignored any real discussion of the topic. *Looking Backward*, the later and more popular work by Edward Bellamy, explicitly rejected the class struggle as an ugly by-product of capitalism's decay.⁶⁴ Hillquit handled the question by obscuring it. He viewed the class struggle as a

broad and rather inclusive phenomenon, "sometimes overt and violent, sometimes concealed and even unconscious."⁶⁵ At times, it resembled rather closely Marx's notion of alienation, a product of the capitalist contradiction in which "modern machinery, although inherently of untold blessing to mankind, operates as a curse upon the toiler under the prevailing system of individual ownership."⁶⁶ The struggle operates not only between classes but within them as well. "The active capitalist is driven by the system more than he is driving it. He is the slave as well as the master of his wealth."⁶⁷

Through this play upon the all-inclusive nature of capitalist exploitation, the class struggle was transformed into an ugly symptom of the system, with those who participate in it lacking a full understanding of their roles. In Spargo's writings, it was "a law of social development. We only recognize the law and are no more responsible for its existence than for the law of gravitation."⁶⁸ Indeed, Spargo argued that the active socialist, in recognizing the reality of the class struggle, can mitigate its antisocial implications.

Class consciousness is not something which Socialism has developed. Before there was a socialist movement, in the days of Luddite attacks upon machinery, and Captain Swing's rickburners, there was class consciousness expressed in the class revolt. Modern Socialism simply takes the class consciousness of the worker and educates it to see the futility of machine destroying, or other foolish and abortive attacks upon capitalists and their property, and organizes it into a political movement for the peaceful transformation of society.⁶⁹

Berger's analysis of class vacillated between a threefold classification and a twofold one. In both, the dominant class is the same—the "plutocracy," composed of "people who are doing nothing and inherited their wealth."⁷⁰ Within the twofold classification, the plutocracy exists in a polar relationship with the "have nothings," those who do "useful work."⁷¹

However, when he examined this latter class more closely, Berger made a point of dividing it between the middle classes, composed of "small manufacturers, merchants, farmers, and some professional men," and the proletariat, composed of "wage workers, and some persons in the professional occupations."⁷² Aligning large segments of the middle classes with the proletariat was, as we have seen, fairly common within the socialist movement. However, unique in Berger's analysis is that the middle classes are given a productive and political purpose

almost on a par with that of the proletariat. Indeed, if at times he may have been inclined to favor this class over other subordinate classes, it is a result of his linkage of class rule to notions of desert and merit.

In previous times, Berger asserted "The ruling class was made up of the most capable and energetic part of the people. The masses were their intellectual and physical inferiors; they [the ruling class] were best fitted for the conditions of the time." However, under capitalism, "the proletariat and the middle class not only do all the useful and necessary work which is to be done under the present civilization, but they also have to keep up that civilization."⁷³

In linking the genesis of class-power with merit, Berger was making a claim for the overthrow of a parasitic capitalist class. At the same time, he was laying the groundwork for the claims of one segment of the subordinate classes for a preferred position—either in the socialist movement or in a reconstructed socialist society of the future. If power was—and presumably ought to be—linked with skill and intellectual ability, the claim of the middle classes, with their relative wealth of intellectual and technical knowledge, for domination over their "inferiors" within the proletariat was given tacit support.

Of course, this meritocratic notion was partially negated by Berger's belief that public education would ultimately be the true leveler. However, since he tended to view education in rather formal and traditional terms, he did not even suspect that an emphasis on education, complete with an adherence to a body of classical knowledge which internalizes class values and biases, might legitimize a new form of class rule even as it destroyed the old one.⁷⁴

By and large, American socialists were reluctant to discuss the nature of the socialist future for two reasons. First, they were inclined to view such speculation as utopian. Second, there was enough division over problems of the here and now so that no new divisive issues were welcomed. Yet, sometimes speculation did occur, and it is worth noting the difference in the futurology of Hillquit as opposed to that of Spargo and Berger. The more dialectically oriented Hillquit perceived the dynamic changes in social and interpersonal relations that the abolition of capitalism might bring, while Spargo and Berger tended to superimpose a publicly controlled economy on the existing bourgeois order.

All, however, pointed to a view of the future where "many features of the present individualistic order will long survive in a state substan-

tially and preponderately socialistic."⁷⁵ Socialism was never conceived of as "a state of absolute and universal harmony." Antagonism and friction would always exist. The difference was that antisocial behavior would be the exception rather than the rule in a society where the exploitation of man by man was minimized.⁷⁶

Rejected also was the notion, popularized by Engels, that the state would disappear in the socialist future. Hillquit asserted that the socialist state, although still a "state," would differ only in that its function would be administrative rather than coercive.⁷⁷ Given the degree of procedural democracy that will accompany socialism, the state need not be "a power independent and opposed to the body of individuals composing it."⁷⁸

In Spargo's analysis, the democratically controlled state was completely legitimized and stood as a power above the ordinary individual. He rejected worker control as a model for economic organization and maintained that in regard to state-run industries, "the state must be superior to the employee and the employee subordinate to the state."⁷⁹

Economically, socialism would mean an increase in the role of the public sphere, although without a complete abolition of the private sector. Hillquit called for the nationalization of "the social instruments of wealth," mainly the large corporations and the trusts.⁸⁰ Those industries "dependent on purely personal skills"—crafts, small farms, and the arts—would remain under private control. A segment of the economy would be controlled by worker cooperatives. Control of the public sector would be distributed among federal, state, and local governments, the federal structure of the United States offering "a very illuminating analogy of such a scheme of organization."⁸¹

In terms of prescriptions for the distribution of wealth and labor, there were clear differences. Hillquit asserted that although Marx's labor theory of value did not apply to a future socialist order, the socialist principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" would be a fair approximation of the socialist goal.⁸² Unlike Berger and Spargo, he predicted a breakdown in the division of labor, giving all an opportunity to do some creative work.⁸³ The incentive for work, in Hillquit's analysis, would not be monetary but rather people's "desire to excel and earn the recognition of their fellow man."⁸⁴ Yet, as consistently radical as this vision of the future might have been, Hillquit viewed it as "a mere ideal, a hope to be realized in the more or less distant future."⁸⁵

Spargo, like Berger, denied that socialism "means equality of ownership or goes beyond equality of opportunity."⁸⁶ Although he was confident that "men will choose the tasks for which their natural talents and aptitudes best fit them," he was prepared to supplement individual wishes with competitive tests.⁸⁷

Spargo said that "there is no incentive known to capitalist society, no force impelling men to labor with diligence, of which the socialist state may not avail itself."⁸⁸ This position was necessitated by his functionalist assumptions on the natural inequality of talent⁸⁹ and his refusal to compromise the division of labor that socialism would inherit from capitalism. "Democracy does not imply the equal fitness of all men for all tasks. Still less does it imply that men of special talents and gifts must devote their time, in whole or in part to labor which other men, not possessing those gifts, could do equally well."⁹⁰

Therefore, while the incentive for genius would be desiring to excel, aiding mankind, and "winning fame and honor,"⁹¹ the incentive for those less gifted would be monetary and external to the work itself. "If any man will not work neither shall he eat."⁹²

To the moderate socialists, the bulk of the changes to be brought about by socialism were external to human consciousness; they were events necessitated by economic conditions. The socialist epoch they envisioned was just one more epoch in which men and women are acted upon by external forces. It was an extension of the determinism of the present age, somewhat equalized and made palatable.

In the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx commented upon this brand of socialism during a discussion of distribution in socialist and Communist society. He asserted that it is wrong to consider distribution as a problem "independent of the mode of production."⁹³ Marx contended that only after there was a breakdown (among other things) in the division of labor, including "the antithesis between mental and physical labor," and only after the appearance of the "all-round development of the individual" could one speak of equal distribution in the sense of "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."⁹⁴ Prior to that time, distribution would naturally be unequal based on a fairness principle which takes into account the unequal contribution of each to the productive process. Marx, however, did not glorify this transitional phase. "But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be

higher than the economic structure of society and the cultural development thereby determined."⁹⁵

However, as we have seen, most moderate American socialists did not envision sweeping changes in the organization of labor, as did Marx. Nor did they see the motivation for work as being anything but external to the work itself. For example, in Berger's analysis, external motivations would be strengthened under socialism since all would receive the full value of their labor in return. Each worker would receive the "equivalent" of his or her work. The type of work each would perform would depend solely on "ability, talent and inclination," and schools would be open to "all competent persons."⁹⁶ Under socialism, as opposed to a totally collectivized society Berger calls "communism," "the collectivity . . . will closely follow along the lines of what people have already long been doing, only they will do so from a socialist standpoint."⁹⁷

Thought too good a Marxist to separate the distribution of society's benefits from the mode of production, Berger and others lacked the vision (or dialectical skills) that enabled Marx to transcend key aspects of the capitalist mode. Since their critique of capitalism did not extend to the organization of work processes but only to the ownership of the means of production and the control of capital, their "socialist man" would be social only in part; production would be socialized (in the sense that the economy would be organized for the public good), but "the consumption would remain individual." "A socialist commonwealth will not do away with the individual ownership of property, but only with the individual ownership of capital."⁹⁸

Implicit in their analysis was the understanding that if private capital investment had no justification in the meritocratic-functional society they argued for, private property—based in part on unequal remuneration for labor—did. Under such an order, the parasitic plutocracy, whose wealth and power were derived from capital investment, would disappear. Class struggle would be eliminated, since those groups remaining would be receiving just (although unequal) compensation for their labor. Marx summed up the essence and limitation of a similar position as follows: "It recognizes no class differences because everyone is only a worker like everyone else; but it tacitly recognizes unequal individual endowment and thus productive capacity as natural privileges. It is therefore a right of inequality in its content."⁹⁹

Moderate socialists viewed the primary function of the Socialist Party

as educating the masses, a position developed by Karl Kautsky. The American Marxists created a conservative version of the position, in much the same way that Lenin developed its radical variant. Kautsky cautioned against the view that socialist consciousness is a direct outgrowth of economic developments and the class struggle. It was his observation that "socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arising under different conditions." While the class struggle may indeed be a product of the working-class experience, socialism is the creation of certain segments of the "bourgeois intelligentsia," who introduce it into the class struggle from without.¹⁰⁰ Applying this theory to an autocratic and backward Russia, Lenin advocated the creation of a disciplined, rather conspiratorial elite "to divert the working class movement from spontaneous trade unionist striving[s]." ¹⁰¹

Yet, many on the American left used Kautsky's argument to create a party whose principal aim, rather than to divert the working class from "pure and simple" unionism, was to divert it from anarchism and other antisocial outgrowths of the class struggle. In Lenin's analysis, the party creates an autonomous value structure for the working class, independent of the dominant culture. The worker is thereby able to stand in total revolutionary opposition to capitalist society. However, guided by men such as Hillquit and Berger, the party strove to achieve a rapprochement (albeit on the workers' terms) with the existing order. In their analysis, proper socialist consciousness was not to place oneself in total opposition to capitalism; it was, in essence, to rise above the instinctual and nihilistic working-class rejection of capitalism and to transform society through the "cooperative commonwealth."

It is interesting that both left and right variants of Second International socialism had similar inclinations. The understanding that socialist consciousness comes to the working class from without led to the tendency (each variant in its own way) to transform its creation from a prerequisite for socialist control of the state to a possible function of the socialist state—once it was formed. In this sense, both the bureaucratic elitism that plagues Western social democracy and the neo-Stalinist state apparatus of the Soviet bloc are linked to a single theoretical supposition—the working class is incapable of defining its own interests.

Berger, though somewhat to the right of Hillquit and others, re-

flected this position in discussing the mediating role of the Socialist Party.

The Social Democratic Party wishes above all things to represent the wage working class in the political field. It is our duty to take care that all people who perform the useful and necessary labor shall be economically, morally, and physically strengthened, reserved from extreme poverty, and made capable of resistance in body and spirit.¹⁰²

The party educates the worker in the need for socialism and compels the government (either through direct control or political pressure) to institute reforms, on a national and municipal level, which would have both immediate and long-range benefits and consequences. The party is interested in solving "those problems which socialists must solve within the present society."¹⁰³ Workers play the subordinate role of backing up the party with their votes and, if necessary, force.

To Berger, at least, the agent of reform was unimportant. "If a new Prometheus should steal the lightning of the 'Socialist Gods' to give it to men and thus build a higher civilization, the writer, like an old heretic, would be most exceedingly rejoiced."¹⁰⁴ Socialist consciousness, perceived by others as a function of struggle, was in Berger's analysis a result of the educational work of the party and one specific reform: an improved educational system. "Unless plutocracy can persuade the majority of the people to close up all the public schools and make illiterates of the next generation, and unless it can also persuade them to give up the electoral franchise, plutocracy is doomed."¹⁰⁵

No Socialist Party had as poor a relationship with its trade unions as the Americans, and it was Hillquit's firm belief that American socialism would succeed or fail depending on its handling of the trade union question.¹⁰⁶ However, while clearly disturbed by the apolitical, nonsocialist orientation of the AFL, many American socialists were all too often willing to accept the "pure and simple" form of trade unionism.

One can point to historical reasons for this attitude. Hillquit and many members of the Eastern wing of the Socialist Party had their roots in the Socialist Labor Party of the 1890s. The party split over a number of issues with the question of dual unionism most prominent. The embarrassing failures of the SLP's progeny, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, were always fresh in the minds of socialists like Hillquit.

Much of their reluctant acceptance of the AFL was a reaction to the De Leonite notion of a revolutionary trade union movement subordinate to a revolutionary party.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, the laissez-faire attitude of these socialists toward the unions was quite consistent with their theoretical analysis. In April 1901, the *International Socialist Review* published an article by Kautsky entitled "Trade Unionism and Socialism."¹⁰⁸ Enlarging on the position of the Socialist International,¹⁰⁹ Kautsky asserted that the greater the concentration of wealth in the hands of monopoly, the more the tendency toward government involvement in the economy. It would, therefore, be fatal for unions to remain aloof from politics. Conversely, socialists would need the active support of labor. This analysis implied a strategy whereby socialists would cultivate goodwill in the unions in anticipation of the day when economic and political events would force unions into politics. The unions would then naturally align themselves with the socialists.

It was the position of Max Hayes, the labor correspondent for the *International Socialist Review* and a man inclined to keep a foot in both camps, that "the federation and many national unions would have declared in favor of socialism some years ago if certain fanatical leaders, so called, had not kept up a running feud against the trade unions and made loud boasts and bluffs of disruption of the pure and simple organizations."¹¹⁰ Hayes's arguments, which were basically accepted by the party, coupled an indestructible optimism with the recognition of quite contradictory facts.

Of course, the bitter attacks that have been made upon the Socialist Party by Gompers and his friends for many years naturally led the unwary to believe that the A.F. of L. is owned by Gompers and is hostile to Socialism. Outsiders didn't seem to realize that Socialism is making immense strides in nearly all international unions, despite the fact that in some of those organizations the radical element, among them many socialists, have seceded or were forced out and established rival unions.¹¹¹

Hillquit believed that not only was the AFL's conversion to an overtly socialist position imminent, but also that the position of the Federation (Gompers, no less) was socialist in all but name.

While testifying before the Industrial Relations Commission, Hillquit had the opportunity to cross-examine Gompers. He solicited the

position that the AFL works to "increase the share of the workers in the product of their labor." When Gompers, comparing socialist goals with those of his organization, declared, "We go farther than you, you have an end we have not," Hillquit took this as clear proof that "the close kinship of aims and interest between the socialist and trade union movements was thus once more strikingly established."¹¹²

Berger often defended the AFL within the socialist movement, and he was a champion of socialism within the Federation. His view of the relationship between the socialist movement and the trade unions can be summed up as follows: "We must have a two-armed labor movement with a political arm and with an economic arm. Each arm has its own work to do, and one arm ought not to interfere with the other, although they are parts of the same body."¹¹³

As did others, Berger estimated that "pure and simple" unionism was quickly disappearing throughout the world. The American working classes, like their comrades in Europe, were learning the necessity of a "political class movement." At the same time, socialists were abandoning their attempts to dominate the labor movements. Berger warned against any breakdown in this clear division of labor. Special criticism was reserved for the organizers of the Industrial Workers of the World; these advocates of "industrialism" sought to "inject trade unionism into socialist politics and to solve political questions by the trade union."¹¹⁴ Furthermore, he was ill-disposed toward the Wobblies' emphasis on organizing among the unskilled, their distaste for hierarchy, and their willingness to work among Slavs, Italians, and blacks.¹¹⁵

Berger was quite comfortable with the AFL's policy of focusing its organizing efforts on American workers, skilled Northern European immigrants, and the best-situated, best-educated elements of the proletariat. These groups were most willing to accept the arguments of gradualism, most likely to appreciate the virtues of "ballot-box socialism," and most inclined toward a political coalition with other "productive" elements in society—the small shopkeeper and businessman, the farmer, and the professional.

To socialists such as Hillquit and Berger, no great role was assigned to the unions in the development of socialist consciousness. The necessary consciousness would be brought to the working class from without. In time, the unions would be forced to cast their lot with the socialists. However, until that time, they would perform the vital func-

tion of "fighting the special and economic battles of the working-man," improving the workers' day-to-day lives, and training them in self-rule and collective behavior. Little faith was placed in the political or economic potential of the unskilled, and the failure of the AFL to organize these segments of labor was not viewed with alarm.

From the standpoint of many American Marxists, the unions were working for socialism despite their lack of socialist consciousness. An active socialist assault on their leadership would only retard the progress already achieved. Even if successful, the tactic would have few advantages. The unions were already doing all they could be expected to do.

Finally, the narrowness of the mainstream Marxist vision is seen in the attitude toward the problems of race and sex. On this question, socialists such as Spargo and Hillquit went only slightly beyond the biases of their day. As a rule, all socialists supported the enfranchisement of women as well as equal pay for those women in the work force. But despite a growing feminist consciousness among women of the left, the existing socialist patriarchy refused to consider the problem except in its relationship to the labor question.¹¹⁶ Spargo was a partial exception; he was particularly anxious to improve the status of women (potential "moderate" allies) within the Socialist Party. He chastised socialists for merely "tolerating our women comrades" and insisted that "the soul of Socialism is as much a living protest against social distinctions based upon sex as against such distinctions based upon property."¹¹⁷

However, since both Hillquit and Spargo saw the role of women in the family structure as immutable,¹¹⁸ their writings tended to relegate women to the margins of public life. For example, Hillquit expressed severe reservations about women's potential for social action. "The wants of the working women are . . . comparatively small and her power of resistance is weak. Women rarely organize into compact and permanent trade unions, they seldom strike or revolt, and they are for that reason better objects of capitalist exploitation than men."¹¹⁹ Hillquit's solution to the women's question was to "improve the lot of the adult male" so as to end the evil of "forced women labor."¹²⁰

The inexcusable nature of this position is best illustrated by the fact that these words by Hillquit were published in January 1909—only nine months before fifteen to twenty thousand women on New York's Lower East Side "rose up suddenly and spontaneously" and walked off their

jobs in protest against their intolerable situation.¹²¹ As Irving Howe remarked,

Nothing in the strike was as remarkable as the girls themselves. Some turned out to be natural leaders, fighting with great boldness, even ferocity. "In the foreground," wrote an observer, "comes a figure of one girl after another as her services are needed. With extraordinary simplicity and eloquence, she will tell before any kind of audience, without any false shame and without self-glorification, the conditions of her work, her wages, and the pinching poverty of her home."¹²²

This strike by women was a catalyst of the general strike of garment workers which lasted through July and August 1910. Morris Hillquit was the attorney for the striking workers.

For his part, Berger was far too eclectic to distinguish between persons and groups solely on the basis of economic class; race and religion were also important. As Sally M. Miller noted in her study of Berger, "He held the pyramidal view common to most types of reformers in the Progressive Era and, in his case, reflective of a Milwaukee-style segregationist view; that is, there were definite ethnic lines dividing superior and inferior people. Whites were at the top of the color pyramid, yellow below, and black at the bottom."¹²³

Berger had an intense if partially justified fear of Rome, and warned of the desire of the Catholic church to become the state church of America.¹²⁴ Nor was he, a man who taught Sunday School in a Milwaukee synagogue, above using anti-Semitism in his political dealings.¹²⁵ Furthermore, Berger had little objection to imperialism, except for the exploitation of colonies for private rather than public gain.¹²⁶

Yet, it was in Berger's polemics against blacks that he reached his nadir. He viewed them as the lowest of all races and wrote that "even the Mongolians have the start on them in civilization by many thousand years." "The many cases of rape which occur wherever negroes are settled in large numbers prove," he continued, "that the free contact with the whites has led to the further degeneration of the negroes, as of all other inferior races."¹²⁷

However, blacks alone were not to be blamed for their behavior; the capitalist system must share part of the responsibility. "The man pronounced superfluous by capitalism changes all too easily from an element of civilization to an enemy of civilization. . . . In the case of

the negro all the savage instincts of his forefathers in Africa come to the surface. It is mainly the 'submerged negro'—quite a numerous element—that is a constant source of danger."¹²⁸

Berger's position on blacks was not altogether removed from that of many within the labor and socialist movements. Most socialists viewed the question of blacks as linked to the general condition of society under capitalism, very often as "artificially introduced by capitalists to divide the working class."¹²⁹ Eugene Debs voiced the consensus of party opinion when he wrote:

I have said and say again that properly speaking, there is no negro question outside of the labor question—the working class struggle. Our position as socialists and as a party is perfectly plain. We have simply to say: "The class struggle is colorless." The capitalists, white, black and other shades, are on one side, and the workers, white, black, and all colors, on the other side.¹³⁰

At least in its formal position, the Socialist Party tried to steer clear of racism. When Louisiana socialists adopted a plank in their platform calling for the "separation of the black and white races into separate communities, each race to have charge of its own affairs," the National Executive Committee forced them to rescind the statement.¹³¹

Nevertheless, the position of the Louisiana socialists was reiterated periodically by the editors of *The Appeal to Reason*, the most popular and widely circulated socialist publication of its day. They maintained that the party advocated "economic" rather than "social" equality, and that socialism would "separate the races."¹³² Even Debs adhered to a version of this distinction.¹³³

Of course, this insensitivity was not particular to American socialists. The Marxism of the Second International tended to an understanding of class that rejected any consideration of social divisions other than one linked to a group's position in the productive process. The indifference of the American movement to the plight of blacks is paralleled by the disregard many European Socialist parties, the Russian party in particular, had for the Jewish question. Indeed, the American party was atypical in that it tolerated both the independent bigotries of men such as Berger and separate national affiliate organizations.

While it is true that such questions of racism and anti-Semitism cannot be considered apart from the economic structure and social relationships which feed on them and perpetuate them, it is equally true

that these atavistic forces retain a somewhat independent existence even after the conditions which produced and nurtured them have been eliminated. Some modern regimes with socialist pretensions have found the residues of hate and misunderstanding quite useful for diverting attention from their own failings. The continued official use of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Poland is a case in point.

The AFL sanctioned segregated locals and admitted restricted unions into its fold. The Federation's attitude was neither extraordinarily progressive nor tremendously backward for its time. Gompers and his associates feigned sympathy for blacks but felt that the movement could ill afford to take chances on such a controversial issue.¹³⁴ In later years, the use of blacks as strikebreakers "was exaggerated by the AFL leaders as an excuse for their own failure to organize the negro workers."¹³⁵

It should be noted that the shaky relationship between the white working class and blacks did not originate with the policies and practices of Gompers. As early as the days of Andrew Jackson, the industrial working class aligned itself politically with the Democratic Party and those groups hurt most by the encroachments of capitalism and the business community. While this coalition included the small farmer, the shopkeeper, and various types of reformers, it also included the Southern plantation owner and other foes of blacks.

Furthermore, the attitude of the white worker toward the black was clouded by the resentment borne against someone whose oppression was recognized by someone whose oppression was not. As the early labor agitator Orestes Browning observed, "It is because they feel that they themselves are virtually slaves, while marked with the name of freeman, and that the movement in behalf of freedom should be directed toward their emancipation."¹³⁶ Even today, many of the indignities suffered by blacks in America are suffered by all working people in more subtle and less recognizable ways.¹³⁷

An additional antagonism was caused by an exaggerated focus on the attitude of some blacks—Booker T. Washington and his school of thought in particular—who believed black people must seek accommodation with white society at the point of least resistance. This point of least resistance was often the Northern capitalist, who viewed the black man's labor as a commodity whose color was of little or no importance. Although (with the founding of the NAACP in 1909) this position found less and less support among blacks, the Negro scab had

already been established as a heinous character in the folklore of the white working class and served as a ready rationale for the tepid labor response to racism.¹³⁸

As is often the case with complex problems, many people sought solutions or rationales in the simplistic racism of men such as Berger. Berger's success could be traced to his adaptability to circumstances, his ability to offer commonsense solutions, and the fact that his views and rhetoric were never far removed from conventional folk wisdom. But this virtue was also a major fault: popular wisdom too often degenerated into the worst bigotries and hates.

Hillquit and Spargo represented the most popular brand of evolutionary socialism within the Socialist Party. From their base in New York, and through their positions on the party's National Executive Committee, they exerted a powerful "conservative force."¹³⁹ At the same time, they helped to mediate between the party's revolutionary left and the Victor Berger-led right. In many ways, Hillquit maintained his strong center position by the use of a Marxist idiom to rephrase reformist arguments. He was, as Berger chided him, "an opportunistic impossibilist and an impossible opportunist."¹⁴⁰

This is not to say that differences between Hillquit and Berger did not exist. While their tactical positions tended to complement one another, their theoretical positions were often quite far apart. Indeed, Berger's own position shared something in common with the left perspectives of Debs and Haywood. For example, while Berger was perhaps more evolutionary in his approach to social change, his position was somewhat less consensual. As did his "impossibilist" opponents, he viewed social relations as often being maintained by force; an armed working class was seen as a strong guarantor of a peaceful and "legal" transition to socialism. Furthermore, to the extent that both the left and the right deviated from the staid determinism of those such as Hillquit, they tended to place a heavier emphasis on activism and the ethical imperatives of socialism.

Therefore, while one could easily view all of Berger's thinking as a transition from socialism to reform, in rebelling against the deterministic Marxism of his day, he did reintroduce a moral imperative into the socialist appeal that gave purpose to human endeavor. Socialists like Berger looked at *Capital* as a moral document whose purpose was not only to educate the world in the laws of capitalist development but also to inform the underclasses of the injustices committed and the

possibility that they might be rectified. They understood that however inevitable, likely, or "scientifically" proven the coming of socialism might be, the cause would gain adherents only when people understood that it ought to be.

Yet, Berger's socialism was more similar to that of a Durkheim than to that of a Marx. He despaired over social conflict and anarchy, the passing of traditions, and the illegitimacy of capitalist power. His polemics were a call to the middle classes and the proletariat to save civilization from the rule of the plutocrats on the one hand and the savagery of a violent revolution on the other.

He perceived the formation of two nations, one composed of the "hungry millions," the other of the "overfed few." Unless rectified through socialist reform, this polarization of humanity would lead to a revolution complete with "fearful retribution." "Such a revolution," Berger warned, "will retrograde all civilization—it might throw back the white race to Barbarism." The evolution of society had left two courses open to man: socialism or revolutionary "barbarism." He viewed himself, and socialists like him, as modern Daniels, calling on all elements of society to see the writing on the wall, "to heed the warning of history," and to initiate reform before it was too late.¹⁴¹

American socialists such as Berger, Spargo, and Hillquit yearned for organization, rational hierarchy, and order. Their concerns were greater for civilization than they were for man, and their fears of deep-rooted radical change at times exceeded abhorrence of capitalism. Whatever tactical advantages their approach might have offered were often dissipated by their lack of a vision transcending a variation of the status quo.

NOTES

1. Morris Hillquit, *Socialism in Theory and Practice* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), p. 4 (hereafter cited as Hillquit, *Theory*).

2. Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897–1912* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1968), p. 107.

3. John Spargo, *Applied Socialism* (New York: Huebsch, 1912), p. viii.

4. John Spargo, *Socialism* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), pp. 181–82.

5. Morris Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up* (New York: Fly, 1912), p. 37.

6. Hillquit, *Theory*, p. 286.

7. Spargo, *Socialism*, p. 76.

8. Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up*, p. 44.

9. Spargo, *Socialism*, p. 103.
10. Ibid., p. 112. Hillquit gives a parallel analysis in *Socialism Summed Up*, pp. 34–35.
11. Karl Marx, *Capital* (Chicago: Kerr, 1906), p. 805.
12. Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up*, p. 34.
13. Hillquit, *Theory*, p. 9.
14. Spargo, *Socialism*, p. 75.
15. Ibid., p. 324.
16. Spargo, *Applied Socialism*, p. 234. See also John Spargo, "The Influence of Karl Marx on Contemporary Socialism," *American Journal of Sociology* 16 (July 1910):21–41, for an analysis which embraces the evolutionary-deterministic Marx while rejecting Marx the revolutionary utopian.
17. See Karl Kautsky's *The Class Struggle* (Chicago: Kerr, 1910) and *The Social Revolution* (Chicago: Kerr, 1902) for representative works by Kautsky during this period.
18. Peter Gay has observed that "Bernstein abandoned dialectical materialism and approached, but did not adopt, neo-Kantianism." *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 161.
19. Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and an Affirmation*, trans. Edith C. Harvey (New York: Schocken, 1961), p. 223.
20. Ibid., p. 149.
21. Ibid., pp. 146–47.
22. George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study*, 2nd. ed. rev. (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 296.
23. Victor L. Berger, "Not Revolutionary Humbug," *Social Democratic Herald*, 22 April 1905.
24. In a letter to Morris Hillquit of 8 April 1905, Berger denied that he was a disciple of Bernstein. Morris Hillquit Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society. Sally M. Miller is correct in saying that Berger "never worshipped at the shrine of doctrine" and "was as willing to exploit Bernstein's revisionism as Marxist Orthodoxy." *Victor Berger and the Promise of Constructive Socialism 1910–1920* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1973), p. 24.
25. Berger, "Not Revolutionary Humbug."
26. Victor L. Berger, "Eduard Bernstein," *Social Democratic Herald*, 19 October 1901.
27. Berger, "Not Revolutionary Humbug."
28. Victor L. Berger, "American Socialism," *Social Democratic Herald*, 9 July 1898.
29. Victor Berger, "Real Social Democracy," in Victor Berger, *Berger's Broad-sides* (Milwaukee: Social Democratic Publishing, 1912), p. 3.
30. Berger, "Moving by the Light of Reason," *Social Democratic Herald*, 15 April 1905.

31. Berger, "Real Social Democracy."
32. Victor Berger, "The Swiss System," in *Broadsides*, p. 139.
33. Berger, "Real Social Democracy."
34. Berger, "Moving by the Light of Reason."
35. Victor Berger, "Are Socialists Practical?" in *Broadsides*, p. 15.
36. Berger, "Real Social Democracy."
37. Hillquit, *Theory*, p. 25. See also W. T. Mills, *Struggle for Existence* (Chicago: International School of Social Economy, 1904), pp. 207-8 for a similar point.
38. Hillquit, *Theory*, p. 26.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
46. The 1904 Socialist Party platform assured the American people that socialism comes "to rescue the people from the . . . successful assault of capitalism upon the liberty of the individual." "National Platform," *International Socialist Review* 4 (May 1904):68.
47. Spargo himself described *Capital* as a very "English" work. *Socialism*, pp. 213-14.
48. Spargo, *Applied Socialism*, p. 207.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
51. Spargo, *Applied Socialism*, p. 147.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 116. See also Spargo, "Private Property and Personal Liberty in the Socialist State," *The North American Review* (June 1909):844-56.
53. Spargo, *Applied Socialism*, p. 109.
54. Karl Marx, *Capital*, 3 vols. (New York: International, 1967) 3:885.
55. Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up*, p. 20.
56. Hillquit, *Theory*, p. 10.
57. Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up*, p. 20.
58. Hillquit, *Theory*, p. 169.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
60. Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up*, p. 53.
61. Victor L. Berger, "A Few Words to Wisconsin Voters," *Social Democratic Herald*, 19 July 1909.
62. Berger, "Moving by the Light of Reason."
63. Victor L. Berger, "How Will Socialism Come?" *Social Democratic Herald*, 29 April 1905.

64. Lawrence Gronlund, *The Cooperative Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965); Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (New York: Signet, 1964).

65. Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up*, p. 14.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

68. Spargo, *Socialism*, p. 152.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 181–82.

70. Victor Berger, "We Did Not Create Classes," in *Broadsides*, p. 8.

71. Berger, "American Socialism."

72. Berger, "We Did Not Create Classes."

73. *Ibid.*

74. Noam Chomsky has observed, "Quite generally what grounds are there for supposing that those whose claim to power is based on knowledge and technique will be more benign in their exercise of powers than those whose claim is based on wealth and aristocratic origin? On the contrary, one might expect the new mandarin to be dangerously arrogant, aggressive, and incapable of adjusting to failure, as compared to his predecessor, whose claim to power was not diminished by honesty as to the limitations of his knowledge, lack of work to do, or demonstrable mistakes." *American Power and the New Mandarins: Historical and Political Essays* (New York: Vintage, 1969), p. 27.

75. Hillquit, *Theory*, p. 105.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 32. See also Spargo, *Applied Socialism*, p. 43.

79. Spargo, *Applied Socialism*, p. 122.

80. Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up*, p. 27. See also Morris Hillquit, "The Socialist Plan of Wealth Distribution," *Putnam's Magazine* (April 1908):54–57.

81. Hillquit, *Socialism Summed Up*, p. 31.

82. Hillquit, *Theory*, pp. 116–17.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 128–31.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

86. Spargo, *Socialism*, p. 313.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

88. Spargo, *Applied Socialism*, p. 71.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 278–79.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

92. Spargo, *Socialism*, p. 306.

93. Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (New York: International, 1938), p. 11.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
95. *Ibid.*
96. Victor Berger, "Capitalist Liberty," in *Broadsides*, p. 88.
97. Berger, "Socialism and Communism," in *Broadsides*, p. 35.
98. *Ibid.*
99. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, p. 9.
100. Quoted in V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1973), pp. 47–48.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
102. Berger, "Moving by the Light of Reason."
103. *Ibid.*
104. *Ibid.*
105. Berger, "We Did Not Create Classes."
106. Morris Hillquit, "Report to the National Committee of the Socialist Party," *International Socialist Review* 7 (January 1907):416.
107. See Howard W. Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), pp. 162–8 for a discussion of the STLA and the split in the SLP.
108. Karl Kautsky, "Trade Unionism and Socialism," *International Socialist Review* 1 (April 1901):598–99.
109. Hillquit, "Report," p. 416.
110. Max Hayes, "Trade Unions and Socialism," *International Socialist Review* 1 (July 1900):51.
111. Max Hayes, "The World of Labor," *International Socialist Review* 11 (May 1911):715.
112. Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), pp. 104–5. It was a favorite intellectual ploy of Hillquit to minimize his differences with political opponents. He used this approach in a debate with a Catholic clergyman, John Ryan. Morris Hillquit and John Ryan, *Socialism: Promise or Menace* (New York: Macmillan, 1917). Hillquit described Ryan's position as "good socialism," p. 233.
113. Victor L. Berger, "Labor Learns in the School of Experience," *Social Democratic Herald*, 2 December 1905.
114. *Ibid.*
115. Although invited, Berger refused the original call to convention that led to the formation of the IWW. Paul F. Brissenden, *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1919), p. 60.
116. M. Jane Slaughter, "Feminism and Socialism," *Marxist Perspectives* 2 (Fall 1979):32–36.
117. John Spargo, "Women and the Socialist Movement," *International Socialist Review* 8 (February 1908):449–55.

118. Hillquit spoke of a married woman's labor as a "pitiful and tragic surrender of her maternal duties." *Theory*, p. 234. The functionalist Spargo argued for sexual "equivalence" rather than equality on the grounds that "an equal obligation to labor does not imply obligations to perform identical services." *Applied Socialism*, p. 269.

119. Hillquit, *Theory*, p. 232.

120. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

121. John M. Lasslett, *Labor and the Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 109.

122. Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), p. 299.

123. Miller, *Victor Berger*, p. 28.

124. Victor L. Berger, "Words of the Saints," *Social Democratic Herald*, 15 September 1905. See also Letter of Victor Berger to Morris Hillquit, 8 April 1905, Morris Hillquit Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, for Berger's complaints of his political problems with the Catholic church of Milwaukee.

125. In June 1900, prior to the formation of the Socialist Party, Berger described Hillquit as a "Polish apple Jew" and a "Rabbinical candidate." Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1968), p. 92n.

126. Victor L. Berger, "Coolies in the Philippines," *Social Democratic Herald*, 15 February 1902.

127. Victor L. Berger, "The Misfortune of the Negroes," *Social Democratic Herald*, 31 May 1902.

128. *Ibid.*

129. David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 51.

130. Eugene V. Debs, "The Negro in the Class Struggle," *International Socialist Review* 4 (November 1903):259.

131. Kipnis, *American Socialist Movement*, p. 131.

132. Shannon, *Socialist Party of America*, p. 52.

133. See Eugene V. Debs, "The Negro and His Nemesis," *International Socialist Review* 5 (January 1904):396.

134. See Julius Jacobson, ed., *The Negro and the American Labor Movement* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1968) for a balanced discussion of the question.

135. Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, 4 vols. (New York: International, 1975), 3:244. See Foner 3:233-55 passim for a more critical analysis of AFL racism.

136. Quoted in David Herreschoff, *American Disciples of Marx: From the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), p. 48.

137. Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's excellent study *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York: Vintage, 1973) implicitly draws numerous parallels between class and racial oppression.

138. Foner, *History*, 3:244-46.

139. Shannon, *Socialist Party of America*, p. 13.

140. Victor Berger to Morris Hillquit, 29 March 1909, Morris Hillquit Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

141. Berger, "Are Socialists Practical?", p. 16.

3

De Leon and Labor

Accommodationism: Two Poles of the Working-Class Movement

In June 1905, an odd collection of working-class trade unionists and social activists assembled in Chicago to lay the groundwork for the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World. While united in their disapproval of the policies of Gompers and the AFL, those present differed on numerous other issues—from the role of the political party and the industrial union to the nature and purpose of political action. Present were Daniel De Leon, the guiding force of the Socialist Labor Party (which was eager to establish a political labor organization to carry on the work of its own unsuccessful Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance); Western labor leader William Haywood, wary of ballot-box socialism; and Eugene Debs, prepared to follow almost any tactic in pursuit of the cooperative commonwealth as long as it was militant, class-conscious, and effective.

Within two years, De Leon would return to isolation within the Socialist Labor Party and his own (Detroit) IWW; Debs would dissolve his ties with the Wobblies while continuing to agitate for any and all labor and socialist struggles; and Haywood would find himself defending militant working-class socialism against both his conservative comrades within the Socialist Party and the “syndicalist”-oriented, antipolitics crowd within the IWW. That these three strains of left socialist thought in America would have found it difficult to remain under one organizational roof is understandable, given the philosophical differences that existed between them. As shall be seen, De Leon’s

notion of a trade union movement dominated by a theoretically correct political party clashed with Haywood's firm emphasis on the development of consciousness through struggle. For his part, Debs rejected the constrictions that acceptance of one tactic over the other implied. While agreeing with De Leon on the nobility of political action and the futility of acts of sabotage, he also maintained a strong faith in the capacity of the working class for effecting its own liberation through constant struggle in all fields.

In considering the ideas of De Leon, Debs, and representative writers of the IWW, we must also consider the thinking of mainstream organized labor. While clearly positioned outside of the socialist camp, those who dominated the American Federation of Labor and their ideas are an essential reference point for understanding the working-class left. De Leon and Samuel Gompers were worlds apart—theoretically as well as tactically. However, the thinking of Gompers, those active in the IWW and, at times, Debs, had much in common. To both the working-class radical and the accommodationist AFL chieftain, the proletariat was not solely a universal class of world historical significance; it was also a collection of concrete, living (and dying) individuals. Its immediate situation was a concern as important as the eventual restructuring of society. They differed not so much in their understanding of how the worker suffers but in their appraisals of what could be done, given the reality of capitalist rule. By contrasting the socialism of De Leon with a working-class accommodationist attitude close to that of Gompers, we see both the basis of antagonism that divided many working-class radicals from dominant modes of middle-class socialist thought and the dialectical tension that gave rise to the working-class socialisms of Eugene Debs and many Wobblies.

In a sense, De Leon's lifework was an attempt to achieve a rapprochement (though not a synthesis) between radical thought and action. Socialism was to be brought to fruition by the working class, and the working class would be guided by a conscious understanding of why this must be so and just how this transition must be achieved. Yet, those persons in possession of the requisite theoretical know-how did not constitute the whole of the proletariat. The overwhelming majority of workers were seen as existing in constant need of direction and guidance. Though the working class might willingly make its revolution, the truths of that revolution would be brought to it from without.

In De Leon's analysis, a stratified social order is the given in the human equation. Its functionality is its only necessary defense. What is peculiar to human society, he observed, is the presence of a "Central Directing Authority," originally devised to "share in by directing Authority."¹ De Leon saw a historical epoch at its zenith when positions of authority were occupied by persons suited to the task.

Under capitalism, De Leon observed, the role of the central directing authority has undergone a marked change. "Its pristine functions of aiding in, by directing, production have been supplanted by the function of holding down the dependent, the slave, the ruled, i.e., the working class."² Having translated obligations and functions into privilege, the ruling class under capitalism performs no useful task.³ Socialism, unlike anarchism, comes not to destroy authority but to destroy the authority of the capitalist class. It would create a new central directing authority of a more legitimate nature.

De Leon asserted that the socialist movement could not ignore the need for authority. Like music, it demanded orchestration and direction. "Socialism . . . implies organization, organization implies directing authority."⁴ Revolutionaries must be prepared "to work in organization with all that implies." They must be willing to submit to the will of the majority, "obedience" being "the badge of the civilized man."⁵ One can, of course, discern classical philosophical themes and images within De Leon's writings. Invoking the spirit of the Platonic tradition, he perceived true consciousness as central to the salvation of an ignorant humanity. "It does not follow that if the very few are gathered on one side, and the very many lumped on the other, the latter will necessarily swamp the former. They will do so only when they shall understand their own revolutionary mission and organize accordingly."⁶ And like Plato, De Leon lamented the fact that these truths are beyond the immediate comprehension of a sheeplike proletariat whose minds "are scribbled over by every charlatan who has let himself loose."⁷

Furthermore, De Leon claimed, individual freedom is an illusive goal in modern society. "Today the highest individual freedom must go hand in hand with collective freedom."⁸ True revolutionaries recognize the necessity of submitting to discipline, knowing "full well that man is not superior to principle, that principle is superior to man."⁹

DeLeon understood freedom in collectivist terms, with subjugation to principle being its highest form. He believed that if a notion of in-

dividual liberty was once compatible with a successful form of organization, that time has passed. Present-day society demands a more collectivist order, and the principles to which the masses should adhere must be formulated independently of their thoughts and actions. While De Leon maintained a participatory ideal in his emphasis on universal consciousness and mass political action, this was done not in the name of freedom but as a means of ensuring the permanence of the revolution. It was an affirmation of the notion that meaningful social change must permeate the minds of men and women.¹⁰

De Leon viewed the political party, the guardian of correct principles, as preparing the working class for the new socialist order. Hardly an instrument of proletarian will, the party actively shapes working-class consciousness and molds the working class into a class capable of its own liberation. As Rousseau posited a lawgiver who "frames the laws" but "ought not to have a legislative right,"¹¹ De Leon viewed the party as popularizing socialist principles yet yielding to the working class and the industrial unions in the administration of the new society.

Prior to the institution of the new order, the central role of the political party is never underplayed; as long as the party exists, its role remains dominant. While De Leon left open the possibility that the working class might be forced to seize power through open insurrection, he perceived the party as preparing the proletariat for its role in that confrontation.

In De Leon's formulations, the party, hardly coextensive with the working class, is composed of a dedicated and zealous elite. It is set apart by its knowledge and determination.

In all revolutionary movements, as in the storming of fortresses, the thing depends upon the head of the column—upon that minority that is so intense in its convictions; so soundly based on its principles; so determined in its actions, that it carries the masses with it, storms the breastwork and captures the fort. Such a head of the column must be our socialist organization to the whole column of the American proletariat.¹²

Since, in De Leon's thinking, a mass working-class consciousness was essential to social change, and the party existed as the guardian of those correct principles so necessary for the development of that consciousness, it stood to reason that the party could not allow theoretical wavering within its ranks. It "must be one thing only to all men, one

thing in all latitudes and longitudes of the land—no perfidy to principle under the guise of autonomy.”¹³

While welcoming middle-class elements into the party, De Leon warned that no hope could be placed in that class as a class. Its position in the social structure inhibited its collective ability to grasp the truths found within the party’s perspective. “The middle classes will have to be sold at auction by the Sheriff,” he wrote. “That alone will enlighten it as a class. When it has lost its property.”¹⁴

While not denying that members of the middle class could be good socialists, De Leon ruled out the possibility of a socialist party cooperating with middle-class reformers who did not accept the party’s philosophy and discipline. Such cooperation would force the party to compromise its theoretical position and would also compromise the moral validity of the socialist cause. Only a movement firmly rooted in the working class and independent of organized bourgeois groups could attack the institutions of private property freely and with consistency.¹⁵

De Leon believed that the United States was “preeminently ripe for socialism.”¹⁶ Hence, efforts at reform were both unnecessary and counterproductive. He viewed the objective conditions for socialism as already present; only the subjective element, a socialist working-class consciousness, was absent. “The moment feudalism is swept aside, and capitalism wields the sceptor untrammelled, as here in America,—from that moment the ground is ready for revolution to step in; from that moment reform becomes a snare and a delusion.”¹⁷ Any compromise with capitalism, every coalition with groups stemming from the middle classes, all advocacy of step-at-a-time reforms—these were viewed as inevitably confusing the working class and impeding its education.

However, at the same time, De Leon was forced to admit that “the conquest of the public powers by the Socialist Labor Party was an impossibility overnight.” In 1900, he estimated it as at least four and as much as ten to twenty years away. (It would be four years before the next presidential election, but it would take a decade or two, in De Leon’s estimation, to improve on the backwardness of working-class thinking.) In the interim, he saw the trade unions offering what “palliatives” might be necessary to give temporary relief to the workers.¹⁸

De Leon did not believe socialists should involve themselves in the debate over the value of trade unions; they should accept their exis-

tence and aim for their improvement by "equipping [them] . . . with the proper knowledge."¹⁹ He viewed the formation of the trade union as a "natural and instinctive move" on the part of the worker, a result of the small amount of class consciousness that exists within the proletariat.²⁰ Like Kautsky, Lenin, and other Second International socialists, De Leon viewed the economic organizations of labor as acting as little more than "a brake in the decline" of the working class under capitalism.²¹ What lasting good the unions could perform would come only when they had recognized the class struggle and acted accordingly.²²

However, to De Leon, the industrial organizations of the working class were the administrators of the coming socialist order. Once socialists achieved a political victory, once control of the state was secure in the hands of the party, the socialist party would "forthwith dissolve, the political state would be ipso-facto abolished; the industrially and integrally organized proletariat will without hindrance assume the administration of the productive powers of the land."²³ Yet, as long as the party exists, its leadership in the revolutionary struggle should not be challenged; only after the revolution would the truths of the party be internalized by the masses so that the many could participate in the running of the new order.

De Leon's understanding of the relationship between the party and the unions reflected his belief in political action and his lack of faith in a working-class struggle unmediated by correct principles. As were the Lassalleans of a generation earlier, De Leon was unimpressed with the union as a weapon in the fight against capitalism. Unlike the Lassalleans, however, he realized that the unions had the allegiance of large portions of the working class. Therefore, rather than seeking to shift the struggle entirely from the industrial to the political plane, De Leon sought to politicize the unions, positing their struggle as absolutely necessary if subordinate.

We see that the head of the lance of the Socialist movement is worthless without the shaft. We see that they are not even parallel but closely connected affairs; we see that the one needs the other, that while the head—the political movement—is essential in its way, the shaft of the lance—the industrial movement—is requisite to give it steadiness. The Labor Movement that has not a well-pointed political lance-head can never rise above the babe conditions in which the union is originally born; on the other hand, unhappy the political movement of labor that has not the shaft of the trade union organi-

zation to steady it. It will inevitably become a freak affair. The head of the lance may "get there," but unless it drags in its wake the strong shaft of the trade union it will have "got there" to no purpose.²⁴

As we have seen, moderate socialists were ambivalent with regard to the role unions could play in promoting socialism. They were, for the most part, content to allow them to pursue their "pure and simple" strategy. De Leon, architectonic thinker that he was, could not allow the unions the luxury of superfluosness. He therefore argued for subjugating the industrial organizations of the proletariat to the discipline of the party and correct theory.

De Leon's belief in political action and his understanding that control of the state and the political apparatus was essential for "the permanent improvement of the working class, let alone their emancipation"²⁵ lay at the heart of his thinking. It separated his thinking from that of both accommodationist and revolutionary labor leaders, whose strategies were largely industrial, and from that of moderate socialists who, as we have found, viewed politics as a means toward reform as much as a way toward the seizure of power. And while De Leon integrated a political-electoral tactic into his thinking, he did not ignore the repressive nature of the capitalist state or worship at the shrine of parliamentary reform.

As mentioned, De Leon felt that only the theoretically attuned political party could bring about socialist awareness in the proletariat. In addition, like all political socialists of his day, he argued that labor must be organized in those areas of political and economic life where the forces of capital are organized. If the capitalists are organized politically and economically, the forces of labor must also be so organized.²⁶

And while De Leon believed political power to be derived from economic power, he understood that the former could be used to reinforce and protect the latter. In the battle between labor and capital, control of the state was essential. In more optimistic moments, he thought that the electoral conquest of the state could be substituted for violent struggle. Control of industry would be legislated into the hands of the workers. In more somber moods, he said that a socialist government could merely neutralize the armed power of the state in the inevitable event of an armed confrontation between labor and the defenders of capitalism.

However, De Leon believed that the use of the ballot brought legitimacy to the workers' cause. Although he viewed it as a "jewel" which is "encrusted with slime," he felt that the idea of settling disputes peaceably was the great and everlasting contribution of the capitalist era to political life.²⁷ "The ballot is a weapon of civilization; the ballot is a weapon that no revolutionary movement of our times may ignore except at its own peril; the socialist ballot is the emblem of RIGHT."²⁸ To reject the ballot, to organize "for force only," would read the revolutionary "out of the pale of civilization."²⁹ Working-class militants who reject political action place themselves on the "barbarian plane"; they "thereby would give the capitalist class a welcome pretext to drop all regard to decency and resort to the terrorism that would suit it."³⁰

Furthermore, political action had a practical *raison d'être*. For those who believed that either economic conditions or militant struggle educate the working class in the logic of the revolution, repression could be a sufferable turn of events. However, to a revolutionary such as De Leon, who envisioned a close, pedagogical relationship between an enlightened party and an ignorant proletariat, capitalist repression would be disastrous. The movement would be forced to become conspiratorial; theory and party would be alienated from the masses; the development of consciousness would be severely inhibited; and that social change which "must be done by the million masses" would be an impossibility.³¹

The rose upon the stalk of "political action" is the posture it enables a man to hold by which he can preach revolution without having to do so underground; in other words, by which he can teach the economics and sociology of the social revolution in the open, where the masses can hear, and not in dark where the few can meet.³²

De Leon did not rule out the ultimate use of force on the part of the revolutionary. "The civilized man answers force with force," he declared; "the barbarian begins with force."³³ He admitted it is perhaps too optimistic to hope for a socialist victory at the polls followed by a peaceful transition to the new order. De Leon saw the interplay of capitalist provocation, working-class resistance, and state repression leading to an armed struggle whose outcome would be determined by the vitality of working-class organization and consciousness. In such a sit-

uation, the industrial union would take on an active role. However, whether the union is up to its task would be dependent upon the success of the party's political agitation prior to the crisis.³⁴

The S.L.P. knows that the political state is worthless, and cannot legislate the socialist republic into life. The S.L.P. man clings to political action because it is an absolute necessity for the formation of that organization . . . which is both the embryo of the Workers' Republic and the physical force that the proletariat may, and in all likelihood will, need to come to its own.³⁵

In De Leon's defense of political action, we see no great belief in popular government. Popular decision-making was an ideal for a post-revolutionary era, and majority rule was as likely as oligarchy to lead to the denial of correct principles. In championing political action, De Leon was arguing for the maintenance of a state of affairs most conducive to the education of the proletariat. He saw the need for order, structured collective activity, and representative organs of decision-making. Given the underdeveloped thinking of the masses, both full participatory democracy and overt, violent class struggle were undesirable. The latter would terminate the education of the proletariat; the former presupposed a form of consciousness that De Leon felt was not as yet present. It was, therefore, many of the weaknesses of the Western liberal polity that appealed to De Leon, for they prevented the working class from doing harm to itself during its formative years.³⁶

De Leon perceived the hierarchical structure of capitalist society as illegitimate and inappropriate. In his analysis, power relations were maintained not so much by force or chicanery as by the ignorance of the masses, who understood neither what true conditions were nor what alternatives to them existed.³⁷ He believed that a class aware of the truth would be prepared to support that political organization capable of using the existing process to secure for the proletariat the power of the state. The political party would help to develop the economic organization (the socialist industrial union) able to defend—through the overt use of force—those gains won politically. The industrial union, having internalized the truths of socialism, would carry on production once societal power was secured.

To De Leon, consciousness was a function not of struggle or economic conditions but of education. The working class must be educated by those—who like Marx and his disciples—have perceived the

truths of history. Political activity is the medium through which this education takes place. One might compare De Leon's conception of the relationship of the party to the worker under capitalism to the role of the parent vis-à-vis the child during childhood. There is a prolonged period during which the party prepares the working class for self-management and during which there is a one-directional flow of knowledge. Only once the working class has internalized the party's message, and only once it has confirmed the correctness of the party's theoretical teachings by voting en masse for the party at the polls, is it free to control its own destiny.

This systematic focus on the need for consciousness was an important advance in American socialist thinking and had great implications in terms of tactics. It reaffirmed the notion that a socialist movement must be aggressive rather than complacent, popular rather than conspiratorial, and furthered by sustained efforts rather than isolated acts. However, in the final analysis, De Leon's insights were undermined by his inability to adequately uncover the source of a socialist consciousness. Unlike parents, party theoreticians cannot point to biology to legitimize their role, and unlike children, the working class is not born into the care of the party. In separating the source of correct theory from struggle, De Leon neither explained consciousness nor the lack of it. Furthermore, Marx's gnawing and challenging statement criticizing the materialist Feuerbach can be leveled at the rather idealist De Leon, who likewise forgot that "the educator himself needs educating."³⁸

Toward the end of his life, following the Socialist Labor Party's return to isolation in the wake of the split in the IWW, De Leon modified his views on the necessity of ideological purity. In a 1908 speech, born perhaps as much of tactical failure as of theoretical insight, De Leon called for the formation of a movement uniting the "most rudimentary" up to "the most clearly and soundly revolutionary" elements, the only criteria being that they all "aim remotely or approximately, mediatedly or immediately, at the overthrow of the capitalist system."³⁹ Whether De Leon, unable to solve the mystery of consciousness, was therefore led to accept the relative states of underclass consciousness as is (and focus on the practice of struggle) or whether he was tacitly acknowledging the need for struggle as a determinant of consciousness is open to question.

Daniel De Leon and his adherents in the Socialist Labor Party com-

prised one important and influential faction at the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World. Other strains of opinion present included the Socialist Party's left wing, represented in the person of Eugene Debs, and the voices of militant unionism represented by men such as Vincent St. John and William Haywood. If De Leon and the SLP delegates were bent on creating a powerful economic arm for the socialist movement, Haywood and St. John were out to create a radical working-class movement which could offer a militant yet practical alternative to the "pure and simple" unionism of the AFL. They envisioned a revolutionary organization of the working class independent of forces outside of the proletariat.⁴⁰ We will find that their distaste for political action was based on their understanding that the state could never serve the interests of the working class and that electoral activity is an inappropriate strategy for a class whose lives are wholly industrial in nature. These views were but a radical rephrasing of traditional American trade union thinking. As Melvyn Dubofsky has remarked,

By their refusing to endorse political parties the I.W.W. did not, as Philip Foner asserts, divorce itself from the mainstream of the American labor movement. Quite the contrary. The I.W.W.'s political position brought the organization closer to the masses to whom it appealed and more in harmony with the attitude of AFL members—those to whom the political party and the state always remained a distant and fearful enemy.⁴¹

To the extent that working-class socialist thought shared common elements with the thinking of labor's mainstream, a workable coalition with the political socialists of the SP and SLP was difficult and impossible. An understanding of working-class accommodationism is therefore the point of departure for analyzing the revolutionary working-class mind. It is often in the sharpest disagreements between Samuel Gompers and the political left that we see the affinity of Gompers's thinking to that of working-class socialists.

A traditional view of Samuel Gompers, as transcribed in the folklore of high school history books and popular writing, is that of a moderate and temperate individual, in tune with the uniquely consensual American environment. He is portrayed as a man who taught American labor to exercise its power in a "natural, normal, manner,"⁴² who sought "to work along the lines of least resistance; to accomplish the best results in improving the conditions of the working

people."⁴³ This is the Gompers who shied away from organizing the unskilled, who was first aloof from and later hostile to socialism, and who cooperated with the barons of industry in the National Civic Federation and with Wilson's government during the First World War. To many, including his radical contemporaries, Gompers's every deed was as supportive of the existing order as it was antagonistic toward socialism and basic social change.

However, histories often focus on the "what" and the "when" at the expense of the "why"; this portrait of Gompers is in part misleading. For if he was in tune with the American environment, that environment was not always consensual. It was Gompers's early understanding that an American labor movement must seek not to antagonize or offend existing opinion for fear of bringing on the reprisals of the public powers. "Professions of radicalism and sensationalism," he observed, "concentrate all the forces of organized society against a labor movement and nullify in advance normal necessary activity."⁴⁴ It could be argued that if Gompers's thinking was accommodationist, it was not always out of love of things as they are, but out of fear of how much worse things might become given the inevitable continuance of existing power relations.⁴⁵

Gompers's career as a labor leader spanned over forty years. In that time, he was involved in almost every major dispute involving American labor, took a position on an indeterminate number of issues, and reversed his stand more than occasionally. His avowed philosophical perspective shifted over the course of a lifetime from a variation of Marxism, to pure and simple—albeit class-conscious—trade unionism, to a working-class variation of old-fashioned American individualism mixed with a call for industrial democracy.

Perhaps no one philosophical stance informed his behavior at any given time. The labor movement of his day was composed of men and women whose ideas spanned a whole range of theoretical positions. At times, Gompers was capable of working closely with all of them. Pragmatic activist that he was, Gompers could cooperate with the mainstream socialists who organized the garment industry in New York, with radical syndicalists in the steel industry, and with a host of pure and simple trade unionists, some of whom were motivated by the highest ideals of the movement, some of whom were corrupt and self-serving. It is not unlikely that in Gompers we could see something of all of them.

What follows is an exposition of a militant working-class accommodationist perspective based almost exclusively on various writings and statements of Samuel Gompers. That his words can be used for this purpose is testimony to the perspective's firm roots in American labor circles. It should be emphasized, however, that Gompers's own beliefs were neither so systematic nor consistently militant.

Working-class accommodationism reflected a rather consistent line of thinking based on a number of clearly defined assumptions. First, it had a deep-rooted distaste for capitalism and the resulting evils; second, it championed the self-liberation of the working class; and third, it believed that the power to change society did not reside with the proletariat and hence revolutionary rhetoric and action were foolish and irresponsible. It sought compromise with the existing order, not out of a total and willing acceptance of capitalism, or even an inability to perceive alternatives, but out of a recognition of its powers.

The working-class accommodationists believed that because "the workers of the United States do not receive the full product of their labor," the labor movement must work to "secure a larger and constantly increasing share of what they produce."⁴⁶ Their primary concern was for the class the movement sought to represent and not for society as a whole. Willing to leave social architecture to the philosophers, mainstream politicians, and socialists, they were concerned with the betterment of workers within the confines of the existing order.

Hillquit was said to have described Gompers as the most class-conscious man he ever knew,⁴⁷ and Gompers himself never denied the existence of class antagonisms. "From my earliest understanding of the conditions that prevail in the industrial world, I have asserted that the economic interests of the employing class and those of the working class are not harmonious. . . . There are times when for temporary purposes interests are reconcilable; but these are temporary only."⁴⁸ To the working-class accommodationists, the proletariat stood alone, not only vis-à-vis the capitalists, but in regard to all other persons and groups outside of its ranks. If workers were advised to be on guard against the forces of capital, they were also to beware of misguided friends. "It is a movement of wage earners for wage earners," Gompers explained, "and it may not be amiss to warn even the well intentioned, the 'so-called intellectuals' . . . that they had better watch out."⁴⁹

The altruistic stance of these reformers underlay proletarian mistrust of intellectuals and radicals. The underclasses were much accustomed

to being utilized and acted upon in "their own interest," either by a paternalistic church, benevolent statesmen and employers, or by "professional friends of labor." Even when such action was taken with the best of motives in mind, working-class militants viewed its effects as no less pernicious. The suffering of the proletariat was a function of its dependency on others. Its alleviation depended on the enhancement of the workers' ability to control the content of their lives.

Doing for people what they can and ought to do for themselves is a dangerous experiment. In the last analysis, the welfare of the workers depends upon their own initiative. Whatever is done under the guise of philanthropy or social morality which in any way lessens initiative is the greatest crime that can be committed against toilers.⁵⁰

These labor activists believed that the labor movement must be allowed to proceed at its own pace, choosing its own goals and tactics free of outside meddling. Eventually, the AFL would organize the unskilled; eventually, the movement would set for itself more radical goals. As the lot of workers improved, they envisioned a qualitative and quantitative increase in their demands. This, however, was dependent on a real increase in working-class power. "For the present," Gompers wrote, "it is our purpose to secure better conditions and instill a larger amount of manhood and independence in the hearts and minds of the workers."⁵¹

Gompers's well-known and much-celebrated philosophy of "voluntarism" and his antipathy toward the state and political action can be looked at in a less traditional light. Working-class activists firmly believed that the state "has always been the representative of the wealth possessors"⁵² and that the political power of the economically privileged is a function of their economic power. "Whosoever or whatever controls economic power," Gompers wrote, "directs and shapes development for the group or nation."⁵³ To look to the state for aid, assistance, or salvation was seen as inviting the further subjugation of the proletariat. It would allow the opponents of labor to exert directly that political power they now exerted indirectly. State intervention in industrial matters would mean that owner, manager, and legal enforcer would be consolidated in one body. Commenting on government ownership in France, Gompers wrote:

The government as employer brooks no opposition from its employees. It can and does wipe out their organization. . . . It can and does control the political

activities of the employees. It can and does hire and discharge not only by merit but by systems of expulsion bearing upon the political principles of applicants for or holders of positions.⁵⁴

Gompers's reliance on and advocacy of voluntary associations was in part linked to two interrelated notions. First, any systematic organization of society based upon a principle of compulsion would inevitably serve the interests of those in possession of economic power. Second, if labor is to gain a share of power—economic and eventually political—it must be confident, self-reliant, and fully aware of its abilities and powers. Gains must be won, not received from above as benevolent gifts. As an instrument for the possible solution of labor's problems, the state could offer only resistance or paternalism. It could not, or would not, mandate that which labor needed—power and self-determination.⁵⁵

Daniel De Leon and Samuel Gompers represented opposite poles in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class. The principled, scholarly, dogmatic De Leon was driven by a vision which called for the complete restructuring of society and saw in the proletariat the instrument for the performance of such an awesome task. By emancipating itself, the working class would save society as well. De Leonite socialism is political socialism par excellence. It returns to a classical notion of politics which conceives of man as inextricably and primarily involved in the salvation of all humanity through the just reordering of public life. The committed socialist goes beyond his or her own needs and self-interest and, guided by correct principles, works tirelessly for the collective good. The lot of the individual worker is of secondary importance to the welfare of the proletariat and to that of society as a whole.

On an opposite pole stood the working-class militants. Pragmatic and tactically—rather than theoretically—oriented, their allegiance was to the working class, defined in terms of the concrete and particular individuals which comprised its ranks. Placing the “salvation” of the working class and the restructuring of society on the back burner, they sought to better the workers' lives within the context of an existing social order. Theirs was a praxis of immediate concern; they strove to work on the level of concrete human suffering and need. “To experiment with the labor movement,” Gompers wrote, “was to experiment with human life.”⁵⁶

The dilemma is one faced by all social activists. It finds substance

in the debates over immediate and long-range goals, reform versus revolution, accommodationism versus rejectionism. Both Gompers and De Leon were cognizant of these dual imperatives. Gompers's heralded goal of "more and more" was a nod toward the political while advocating a strategy of compromise.⁵⁷ In De Leon's analysis, party generals lead the foot soldiers of the working class into battle for the salvation of all humanity; yet, the implied sacrifice on the individual level is mitigated by the consolation that the battle may only be fought with ballots rather than bullets. Furthermore, like Lenin, whom he resembled so strongly in many ways, De Leon had a firm belief in the immediacy of the revolution and in the vanguard role of the party. He viewed reform as unnecessary, even counterproductive, and it was inconceivable to both the Russian and the American socialist that a theoretically correct party might lead the working class into a revolutionary adventure that would not succeed or that might not be in its interest. It is with this dilemma in mind that we approach the socialism of Eugene Debs and the militants of the IWW. Despite the frequent simplicity and roughness of their prose, and despite their occasional inconsistencies in logic, the activists of the working-class left sought solutions which often bridged the gap between pragmatism and principle, between the need for immediate reform and the search for the revolutionary future.

Marx's formula was to wait for the revolution until that moment when human suffering had reached the crisis point, when a solution on the level of individual self-interest was only possible through a political solution, when to save themselves individuals must save their class and humanity as well. The working-class militants of an IWW and Debsian persuasion, whose approach to socialism is discussed in the next chapter, viewed the underclasses as already suffering on that lowest level. They argued that workers were already being shot, children were already starving and, as citizens, the proletariat was already disenfranchised. To them, it was the party functionaries who betrayed their cause by sacrificing the current generation of workers for the sake of some future electoral victory.

NOTES

1. Daniel De Leon, *Reform or Revolution* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1918), p. 5.

2. Ibid., p. 6.
3. Daniel De Leon, *What Means This Strike?* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1916), p. 8.
4. De Leon, *Reform or Revolution*, p. 8.
5. Ibid., pp. 16–17.
6. Daniel De Leon, *As to Politics* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New York Labor News, 1966), pp. 107–08.
7. De Leon, *Reform or Revolution*, p. 19.
8. Ibid., pp. 17–18.
9. Ibid., p. 16.
10. “Reform means a change of externals. Revolution, peacefulness or bloodiness of it cuts no figure whatever in the essence of the question, means a change from within.” De Leon, *Reform or Revolution*, p. 2.
11. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin, 1968), p. 86.
12. De Leon, *Reform or Revolution*, pp. 22–23.
13. De Leon, *As to Politics*, p. 109. De Leonists have long asserted that Lenin considered De Leon the most original socialist theorist since Marx and was impressed with the syndicalist bent to De Leon’s social engineering. See Arnold Peterson, *Marxism Versus Soviet Despotism* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New York Labor News, 1958), pp. 13–20 for a standard De Leonist attempt to link the two theorists. A reported interview given by Lenin to the radical American journalist John Reed is often cited. Henry Kuhn, “Reminiscent of Daniel De Leon,” in *Daniel De Leon: The Man and His Work* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1934), p. 81. However, there is little written evidence of this beyond the Reed interview, and as Charles A. Madison has observed, “There is no evidence that any of De Leon’s ideas were incorporated into Lenin’s theories and practices.” *Critics and Crusaders* (New York: Holt, 1947), p. 470. Carl Reeves informs us that Lenin did have an inclination to publish De Leon’s *Two Pages from Roman History* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1915). This work, however, deals not with syndicalist models of social and industrial organization but with the evils of reformism and the need for a disciplined and hierarchical socialist movement. This, of course, sheds a whole new light on Lenin’s admiration for De Leon. Carl Reeves, *The Life and Times of Daniel De Leon* (New York: Humanities, 1972), p. 178.
14. De Leon, *Reform or Revolution*, p. 26.
15. De Leon, *Two Pages from Roman History*, p. 71.
16. Quoted in David Herreschoff, *American Disciples of Marx: From the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), p. 136.
17. Daniel De Leon, *Flashlights of the Amsterdam Congress* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1929), p. 193.

18. *The Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance Versus the "Pure and Simple" Trade Unionism: A Debate Held at the Grand Opera House of New Haven, Connecticut, November 25, 1900, Between Daniel De Leon and Job Harriman* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New York Labor News, 1900), p. 6.

19. Daniel De Leon, *The Burning Question of Trade Unionism* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1917), p. 37.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

22. *Debate . . . Between De Leon and Harriman*, p. 6.

23. De Leon, *As to Politics*, p. 60. De Leon never challenged the need for a strict division of labor. However, his functionalism had a more left-wing bent than that of Berger or Spargo in that he asserted that the rate of compensation would be based on a quantitative rather than qualitative evaluation of labor. He illustrates this point by observing that the salary of a college professor would be no more than the income of a railway brakeman. (Of course, many present-day college administrations would consider this a utopian and radical proposal.) *Fifteen Questions Asked by the Providence Rhode Island Visit or Representing the Roman Catholic Political Machine* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1914), pp. 13, 51.

24. De Leon, *The Burning Question of Trade Unionism*, pp. 30–31.

25. *Debate . . . Between De Leon and Harriman*, p. 6.

26. De Leon, *Reform or Revolution*, p. 32.

27. De Leon, *As to Politics*, p. 17.

28. Daniel De Leon, *Socialist Reconstruction of Society* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1921), p. 40.

29. De Leon, *As to Politics*, p. 17.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 41–52.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

34. See *ibid.*, pp. 62–65.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62. It was De Leon's understanding that the class struggle would take a violent turn at the point the forces of capitalism understood that they would lose the battle if fought by democratic means. The working class would then be forced to take up arms in defense of both socialism and democracy. Even prior to the outbreak of civil war in Spain, the British socialist Harold Laski reasserted this point: "A socialist government, unless it desires deliberately to provoke revolution, cannot ride rough-shod over the vested interests. . . . It has to discuss, negotiate, conciliate." However, Laski, like De Leon, was willing to provoke armed reaction and take his chances on an aroused working class. *Democracy in Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), p. 105.

36. One need not, therefore, find any irony in the oligarchical nature of Second International parties. Contrary to Michels, such tendencies are not endemic to modern social organization but merely reflect the particular ideological proclivities of socialist elites. See Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Dover, 1959).

37. One should not rule out more personal, psychological explanations of De Leon's authoritarianism, given his inability to tolerate dissent within the SLP and the abundance of ex-De Leonists within the socialist movement of his day.

38. Marx, Karl, and Engels, Fr  derich. *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, ed. Lewis S. Feuer (New York: Anchor, 1959), p. 244.

39. *Unity: An Address by Daniel De Leon at Pythagorus Hall, N.Y., February 21, 1908* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1908), p. 8.

40. As we will see, the position of Debs stands between those of De Leon and the militants of the IWW. While his tactical approach was superficially similar to De Leon's, his reasoning paralleled that of the Wobblies.

41. Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969), p. 58.

42. Samuel Gompers, *The American Labor Movement: Its Make-up, Achievements, and Aspirations* (New York: AFL, 1914), p. 20.

43. U.S. Congress, Senate, Commission on Industrial Relations, *Final Report and Testimony* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 2:1528.

44. Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography*, 2 vols. (New York: Dutton, 1925), 1:97. Gompers wrote these words in direct criticism of Victoria Woodhull and her sister, Tennessee Claflin, who, with their comrades in Section 12 of the Socialist International, were conspicuous in championing social as well as economic issues. Gompers accused the women of prejudicing the authorities against the labor movement by their actions during the winter of 1874. Their rhetoric, he maintained, was used to justify a police attack on a peaceful labor demonstration. It is interesting that Gompers accepted police violence as a potential given but eschewed radical rhetoric as avoidable.

45. For a discussion of working-class accommodationism from a neo-Leninist perspective, see Frank Parkin, *Class Inequality and Political Order: Social Stratification in Capitalist and Communist Societies* (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 79–102 passim.

46. Gompers, *The American Labor Movement*, p. 23.

47. Quoted in Louis R  ed, *The Labor Philosophy of Samuel Gompers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 57.

48. Gompers, *The American Labor Movement*, p. 23.

49. *American Federationist*, November 1915.

50. Samuel Gompers, *Labor and the Common Welfare* (New York: Dutton, 1919), p. 14.

51. U.S. Congress, Senate, Commission on Industrial Relations, *Testimony*, 2:645. For many years, Gompers was opposed to compulsory health insurance on the grounds that it is "based on the theory that they [workers] are unable to look after their own interests and the state must interpose its wisdom and assume the relation of parent. . . . There is something in the very suggestion of this relationship . . . that is repugnant to free born citizens." *American Federationist*, April 1916.

52. American Federation of Labor, *Convention Proceedings* (1899), p. 15.

53. Gompers, *Autobiography*, 1:287.

54. *American Federationist*, February 1913.

55. Following the AFL's cooperation with the government in support of the First World War, Gompers increased his attacks on capitalism. It was as if the state had been neutralized and more radical demands could be made. In his last convention speech, he called for an extension of democracy to the economic sphere and a war on "an autocracy of employers, of profiteers, of possessors of material things." American Federation of Labor, *Convention Proceedings* (1924), p. 256.

56. Gompers, *Autobiography*, 1:98.

57. The California *Labor Clarion*, 25 July 1902, reported the following remarks from a speech by Gompers. "There is no limit to the demands of labor. You may try appealing to us by saying we received more last year or more this year and we answer 'We shall want more tomorrow; we shall want more the next year. After we have received that, we will want more. We will struggle for more and continue to struggle for more.'" Quoted in Philip Taft, *Labor Politics American Style: The California State Federation of Labor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 256n.

4

Socialism in the Working Class: Debs and the Wobblies

It has been argued that there was little originality in the thought of either the Wobblies or Debs. The historian Melvyn Dubofsky observed that the IWW

offered no genuinely original ideas, no sweeping explanation of social change, no fundamental theories of revolution. Wobblies instead took their basic concepts from others; from Marx the concepts of labor value, commodity value, surplus value, and class struggle; from Darwin the idea of organic evolution and the struggle for survival as a paradigm for social evolution and the survival of the fittest class; from Bakunin and the Anarchists the "propaganda of the deed" and the idea of "direct action"; and from Sorel the notion of the "militant minority." Hence IWW beliefs became a peculiar amalgam of Marxism and Darwinism, anarchism and syndicalism—all overlaid with a singularly American patina.¹

While the individual ideas may indeed have been culled from others, the uniqueness of Wobbly thought was in the manner these ideas were used and combined. This "peculiar amalgam" was militantly socialist (while escaping the European dogmatisms that burdened the writings of Hillquit) and "singularly American" (without falling prey to either contrivance or the bourgeois bigotries that colored the writings of Berger). Furthermore, the dynamic process by which Wobbly thinking was formed is of special significance. As Dubofsky further noted "They read to understand better what they already knew from

life. For above all else, Wobblies derived their belief from their own experience in America."²

Working-class socialists began their analysis with an understanding of the pathetic condition of their class under capitalism. Their world was one in which the "doors of opportunity" were shut to the workers' children,³ and in which the brutal facts of life under wage slavery had obliterated racial lines and sex discrimination. "There is no chivalry in the work shop," William D. Haywood exclaimed. "Capitalism compels sex equality."⁴ Haywood saw himself and others on the working-class left as speaking for the "masses," a stateless, propertyless underclass that existed apart from both the propertied classes and the skilled proletariat.⁵ His protagonists were not noble craftsmen, proficient at their trade, nor even robust laborers who suffered with dignity and suppressed anger at the oppressive conditions under which they worked and lived. Working-class socialists viewed the bulk of the American work force as existing on the border of despair. "Life for them has lost all light and beauty and hence all desire for more of its good things."⁶ They spoke to and for an American proletariat comprised of individual tragedies and sought to nurture a sense of collective viability.

Hope was seen in working-class organizations, the militant union and, properly structured, the socialist political party. Their value was to "show the working class how to save itself."⁷ The Wobbly viewed these organizations, be they political or economic, as schools in which the proletariat would carry on the self-education necessary for the development of a socialist consciousness, and in no way as the "instructors" of the working class.

Shortly after the formation of the Socialist Party, Eugene Debs wrote: "Oh that all the working class could and would use their eyes and see, their ears and hear, their brains and think. How soon the earth could be transformed and by the alchemy of social order made to blossom with beauty and joy."⁸

The working-class radical of a Debsian or IWW persuasion viewed consciousness as the key to social change. The eclectic tactician Debs never denied that the state might institute socialism; conversely, he did not rule out a more syndicalist road to power as envisioned by the IWW.⁹ However, what Debs emphatically asserted was that only a consciously socialist electorate could elect and sustain such a state, and only a union movement imbued with a socialist vision might be able

to move from isolated militant activity to a program of organized social transformation.

While also emphasizing consciousness, Deb's notion of how socialist consciousness develops was otherwise at odds with De Leon's thinking. On this point, Debs was at one with the understandings of the IWW radicals and, characteristic of an American working-class radical, his thought reflected his own experiences on the road to socialism. In his essay "How I Became a Socialist," Debs presented himself as a proletarian everyman who embodied in his personal history and thinking the experience and potential of the working class as a whole.¹⁰

As a young railway worker, Debs joined the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. It was, he reflected, not an unusual course of action. Any worker would be naturally impressed with the righteousness of the union's cause, by the challenge of the struggle, and by the sincerity of the organization's leadership. The young unionist Debs began to appreciate the lot of the working class as a whole as he understood the plight of his fellow railway workers in particular. He became interested in working people as a "class."

A concern for the welfare of his class led Debs to question the nature of trade union organization. Again, characteristic of the working-class left, he viewed organizational structure as a decisive factor in the development of consciousness. He concluded that organizing along craft lines implied a denial of the commonality of interests which potentially united the proletariat; industrial organization, on the other hand, reinforced the solidarity of workers with their class. The fruit of this line of thinking was the formation of the American Railway Union (ARU) in 1893. Debs was its first president. The union's first year saw a phenomenal growth in membership and a string of significant victories. With a membership of one hundred fifty thousand, the ARU was the largest single union in the United States. A strike against the Great Northern Railroad in the spring of 1894 won an impressive aggregate wage increase.¹¹

In May 1894, four thousand ARU members, employees of the Pullman Company, walked off their jobs in protest against the paternalism and arrogance of the company, which had refused to roll back rents in company-owned houses, restore wage cuts, or even negotiate in good faith with its workers. (This action on the part of the Pullman workers was taken against the advice of Debs and the union leadership.) As

Debs later recounted, the strike was to trigger a series of events during which he was "to be baptised in socialism in the roar of conflict."¹²

What began as a grass-roots walkout by Pullman workers led to an ARU boycott of Pullman cars. The entire national railway system was paralyzed. However, a federally backed court injunction against the strikers led to—and ensured—their defeat. That the injunction was based on the supposedly progressive Sherman Anti-Trust Act, and that the troops were dispatched illegally by the president against the wishes of the governor of Illinois, were key factors in the education of Eugene Debs. Throughout the remainder of his life, Debs insisted upon, as an obvious fact, the collusion of government and corporate interests and the class nature of the modern state. When the dust had settled, the ARU was all but destroyed; its leadership was in prison, and its membership was confused and demoralized. Gompers and the leadership of the AFL were firmly convinced of the logic and wisdom of accommodationism, and Debs was well on his way to being a socialist. "In the gleam of every bayonet and the flash of every rifle," he wrote, "the class struggle was revealed."¹³

In Debs's analysis, struggle and conflict breed not only a militant trade union outlook but the germ of revolutionary socialist consciousness. Further struggle and intellectual study cause this consciousness to crystallize and grow. While in prison, Debs followed the classical theoretical road from the utopian essays of Bellamy and Grunlund to the "clear and conclusive" contemporary arguments of Kautsky. He finally found his way to Marx's *Capital*.¹⁴

If, in Debs's thinking, a socialist consciousness is developed by the worker in the course of struggle, the role of theory is nevertheless not discounted. Theory acts to nurture, reinforce, and articulate those truths of the class struggle which workers come to understand in the course of their day-to-day confrontation with capitalism. Both Debs and the Wobblies believed the intellectual road to socialist thinking was an easy one for members of the subordinate classes. Proletarian veterans of the class struggle would embrace socialism willingly; the logic of its theory would be grasped by their intellects and affirmed by their life experiences.

Neither Debs nor the Wobblies viewed the working class as slavishly following the dictates of philosophers or parties. Although they agreed with De Leon on the importance of a socialist consciousness

and the need for truly revolutionary working-class organizations, they rejected the notion that crisp theoretical thinking was the monopoly of an enlightened few. The worker, they asserted, must "cultivate the habit of doing his own thinking."¹⁵ It was an unchallengeable tenet of radical working-class thinking that only the proletariat could grasp the complete essence of capitalism's destructive nature and, therefore, that only the working class could conceive of the proper solution.¹⁶ With words that echoed both Marx and Gompers, Debs wrote, "The greatest discovery the modern slaves have made is that they themselves their freedom must achieve."¹⁷

In Debs's writing and thinking, we see a dialectical interplay between struggle, the level of consciousness, and the level of organization. As workers engage in struggle, they see the logic of a class analysis of society and the need for industrial organization. Once organized along industrial lines, workers begin to perceive and experience their common interest with other workers who do similar yet not identical work. Eventually, the interdependence of all industry (and hence the logic of socialism) becomes apparent to workers as the concept of "class" is further crystallized in their minds. "With each new battle," Debs asserted, "the trend has been steadily toward a more perfect organization and a more comprehensive grasp of its [the working class's] mighty mission."¹⁸

To the founders of the IWW, organizational factors were of such supreme importance that the success of the struggle was dependent upon them. In their analysis, struggle—however intense—carried on within a nonrevolutionary craft union could never lead to a socialist consciousness; the structure and tactics of such organizations were a direct contradiction of everything socialist. Conversely, a militant labor organization, organized along industrial lines and unwilling to sanctify through a time contract the "rights" of the employer, embodied in its structure and tactics both the reality and the goals of the class struggle.

The Wobblies viewed the class struggle as an objective fact—given the zero-sum nature of a capitalist system in which "the less one gets the more there is for the other."¹⁹ A class union, defined as a union which "attempts to unite all workers against all capitalists,"²⁰ was most suited to carry on the struggle, since it refrains from pitting worker against worker within a single industry. By not caring for the interests of all workers within an industry, the craft union obfuscates the reality

of the class struggle and prevents workers from perceiving what should be self-evident and obvious: the all-consuming struggle between labor and capital.

Furthermore, Wobblies believed craft unions committed grievous errors in signing contracts. This act relinquished their right to withhold their collective labor, either in support of workers in other shops, trades, or industries or to further their own personal goals. In IWW reasoning, the time contract neutralized the only weapon or source of power open to the proletariat—the strike—while not encroaching in any way on the source of the capitalists' power—their wealth and their freedom to utilize their capital as they saw fit. A contract does not prevent "the capitalist from shutting up his shop and turning the worker into the streets whenever he pleases."²¹ Wobblies did not view the impoverishment of the proletariat as the core problem of labor but rather as a symptom of labor's basic problem—powerlessness. By narrowly focusing their demands on the fruits of labor (and not on control of the work process), craft unions reinforced, through their acceptance of time contracts, the powerlessness of the worker. They undermined the only means capable of rectifying the situation—class unity and the industry-wide strike. "An agreement between the capitalist class and the working class is an unholy alliance, and when entered into by any body of working men, it removes them from their class and the class struggle and makes them auxiliaries of the enemies of labor."²²

Furthermore, Wobblies feared that signing contracts would betray the class struggle by reinforcing in workers' minds a belief in legality and consensus rather than conflict and coercion as the cement which binds human relationships under capitalism. As Vincent St. John, the enigmatic spokesman of antipolitics sentiment within the IWW, declared, "The Industrial Workers of the World maintain that nothing will be considered by the employers except that which we have the power to take and hold by the strength of our organization."²³

Given the bias of the state (the final interpreter of legal documents), Wobblies saw the contract as a false assurance to the weaker labor organization and a superfluous one to the stronger union. Just as shop militancy and the strike educated the worker in the truths of the class struggle, the signing of contracts was a lesson in class collaboration which would retard the development of a militant class consciousness.

Wobblies hypothesized that a union organized along industrial lines would give workers the power of the general strike in any given in-

dustry:²⁴ "It would prevent the capitalists from disenfranchising the workers in the shops. . . . It makes them [the workers] eligible to legislate for themselves where they are most interested in changing conditions, namely in the place where they work."²⁵ Workers organized within an industrial union were held to be naturally educated in self-management, potentially imbued with a militant and socialist class consciousness, and capable of changing many of the conditions responsible for their misery.

Through shop militancy and the proper structural organization of the proletariat, the Wobbly sought to resolve the dilemma between immediate and long-range goals. The working-class radical did not reject reforms instituted within the framework of the capitalist order but insisted, as did Gompers, that such reforms be at the workers' initiative and the direct result of working-class struggle. Wobblies were active in pressuring for an eight-hour workday, and Haywood observed that were such a reform brought about through direct struggle rather than government legislation, it "would be a mightier law in the interest of the working class than all the laws ever passed by Congress and the State legislatures."²⁶ Although Wobbly rhetoric often spoke of an imminent final showdown with the forces of capital, there was little objection to "step-at-a-time" socialism, provided that the final goal not be lost sight of and that the steps be taken by the workers themselves in the course of struggle.

Debs took a somewhat different approach. The son of a French immigrant, Debs was in some ways as much an heir to the romantic humanist tradition as he was a convert to Marxism. In his writings and speeches, he alluded to the spiritual rewards of struggle; he viewed every lost battle as a victory on the road to consciousness and socialism. Hence, "no strike has ever been lost, and there can be no defeat for the labor movement."²⁷ On the level of the individual worker, martyrdom is mitigated by the satisfaction of knowing just why and by whom one is being destroyed; the process of struggle carries its own rewards and is liberating, regardless of the outcome. Of course, to many in the IWW, such martyrdom was neither noble nor admirable; abuse and death were the standard "reward" for their element of the proletariat. To the Wobbly, revolutionary militancy was a pragmatic and not a romantic response to an intolerable situation.

In both the language and content of the IWW's defense of industrial unionism, we see its link with Gompers and its desire to transcend the

AFL brand of unionism. The Wobbly rejected Gompers's accommodationist notion of "more and more" because it lacked an ultimate end and was doomed to failure as long as workers were antagonistically organized along craft lines. However, the IWW shared Gompers's distaste for the political socialists who tended to postdate meliorative reforms to some future revolutionary epoch. The similarities and contrasts with Gompers can be seen in the following quote from a Wobbly pamphlet, attributed to William E. Trautmann: "The industrial unionists propose to organize the workers for militant action within present day society, so that with every advance gained, the workers will gain an appetite for more and for all, and will find the means to get it."²⁸

In industrial organization, the working-class socialist saw both the proper form of the day-to-day struggle and a type of organization compatible with all possible demands, up to and including the demand for the complete restructuring of society.

When the workers organize industrial unions, copied from the institutions in which they are employed, they will be able to stand together as powerful industrial combinations in their skirmishes for better working conditions in any one industry. Not separated by craft divisions, or trade union contracts with the exploiters, they will not only be able to curtail production on a small scale, and thus also the profits of the employers of labor, but they will abruptly stop production altogether, if necessary in any one industry, or in all industries of a locality, or they can when they are powerful enough, shut the factories against the present employers and commence production for use.²⁹

In keeping with his tactical eclecticism, Debs's attitude toward union organizing was both supportive of IWW thinking yet more respectful toward the AFL. What he advanced was his own version of the "two-armed" theory of the labor movement, variations of which were common among many socialists of his day. Moderate and conservative socialists such as Hillquit and Berger consistently advocated a live-and-let-live relationship between the socialist political party and the trade unions. In their formulation, the political arm of the labor movement (the political party) should take no direct stand on the policies of the economic arm (the trade unions, or more specifically, Gompers and the AFL). Although as individual members of AFL unions moderate socialists (including Berger) often opposed the policies of the Federation's leadership from within, they tended to support AFL policies inside the Socialist Party caucuses. In short, they were loyal to the party

within the Federation and loyal to the Federation within the party. This was, in many ways, a reaction to the policies of De Leon—his heavy-handed approach to the labor question and his premature venture into dual unionism with the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. While De Leon advocated a labor movement subordinate to party polity, the coalition that founded the Socialist Party in 1900 was content to remain aloof from the question of socialism in the established unions in the hope of “re”-gaining the good will of the AFL leadership.

For his part, Debs recognized the right of each “arm” to act and think independently of the other, yet maintained that both the party and the unions should reserve the right to criticize the other for deviations from sound principles. The obligation of giving support, in his mind, did not negate the obligation to criticize. Criticism, however, should be offered carefully, so as not to give the impression that the party was attempting to dictate union policy or vice versa.³⁰ As late as 1904, a year before the founding of the IWW, Debs wrote emphatically of maintaining a distance between the political and economic organizations of the labor movement. It was his belief that the difference in function between the two types of organizations made it impossible for either to ever successfully dominate the other for any useful purposes. “The trade union is not and cannot become a political machine, nor can it be used for political purposes. They who insist upon working class political action not only have no intention to convert the trade union into a political party but they would oppose such attempt on the part of others.”³¹

To be sure, Debs was not defending the policies of Gompers and the AFL but rather the principles of organizational autonomy in regard to a socialist party and socialist unions. Debs’s own objections to Gompersism were as strong as his distaste for De Leonite prescriptions. The trade union was, to Debs, an ever dynamic force continually reacting to the “increasing economic dependence of the workers.”³² Its organization was to be determined by the nature of the industry, the level of technology in that industry, and the workers’ relationships to their fellows. The modern industrial union was therefore the outgrowth of the same logic which once dictated the form of the craft unions. To the extent that different workers possessed a different experience of capitalism, Debs believed they should be organized differently. Conversely, to the extent that their experiences were similar, a common organization was essential. The old Knights of Labor had sought to

unite all workers under one organizational roof. The industrial unionists under question attempted to balance in their organizational structure a recognition of both the real divisions within the proletariat and the interdependence and commonality of interests that united workers. Debs viewed the AFL as bent on preserving craft autonomy "while the lines which once separated them are being obliterated."³³ To Debs, "The old unions were built on tools that have been discarded and upon trades that have ceased to exist."³⁴

The Debsian critique of the AFL points to a major difference between working-class American radicals and many of their socialist brethren. To the latter, the "pure and simple" beliefs of Gompers were a result of his ideological backwardness. Economic conditions would sooner or later bring him to his senses. Since the leaders of the Federation were perceived as potential socialists, the organizational autonomy of the AFL was consistently championed by men such as Hillquit and Berger. Debs, however, often asserted that the organizational nature of craft unions made such a conversion to socialism improbable. Economic conditions had already signaled the need for a new form of union structure, yet the message went unheeded by the Federation's leadership. Debs and the Wobblies perceived a clear correlation between structure and the potential for ideological development which necessitated the formation of a new labor organization based on sound organizational and ideological principles. The goals of this new organization would be naturally socialist.

Greatly as the industrial union differs from the trade union structurally, the differences in their tendencies and ultimate objects is still more radical and far reaching. Whereas the trade union occupied itself mainly with establishing and maintaining satisfactory wage scales, hours of labor and working class conditions, industrial unionism is based upon the natural economic interests of all workers and the solidarity arising therefrom aims not only at the amelioration of the industrial conditions of workers, but at the ultimate abolition of the existing productive system and the total extinction of wage servitude.³⁵

If to people such as Hillquit socialist consciousness was ultimately the function of the unconscious forces which moved the economy, to Debs and the Wobblies that reactive tendency would be undermined by archaic organizational structures which blind large elements of the working class to the realities involved in the collectivization of the productive process. Knowledge of economic conditions (gained al-

ways through confrontation and struggle) might eventually awaken in the proletariat the need for a better form of working-class organization; it could not, given the obfuscating effects of craft union structure, educate the working class in socialism. The message of the industrial unionists was clear. Before workers could begin to understand the why and how of reorganizing society, they must first reorganize themselves.³⁶

The Wobblies' emphasis on organizational structure was further informed and complemented by a focus on the need for workers to control that which most directly affected their lives—the organization of the workshop and the factory. It was central to their thinking that as long as workers were unable to control the organization of work, they would be enslaved. We have already noted that the Wobblies' main objection to the workers' inability to control the productive process was the powerlessness implicit in the situation. Happiness depended on the workers' ability to define for themselves its content. Thus, the language of the working-class left seldom concerned itself, as Hillquit and Berger did, with what would constitute "public property" and what would constitute "private property" in some future order. The concept of and desire for property were the products of a bourgeois world which Wobblies could not have been more alienated from. Though they spoke of collective ownership, they always linked it with collective control; the clear implication was that power and control were what mattered. "The world is ruled by force. The foundation of that force is control over a large number of people. The capitalists rule the world today because they have organized the workers in the shops and control them. They own and direct the industries."³⁷

If workers were unhappy with their jobs, if they did not own the tools and the machinery they worked with, it was only symptomatic of the larger problem—powerlessness. Workers were powerless to effect change; they were continually being acted upon rather than realizing their potential to dictate the terms of their existence. The uprooted middle-class intellectuals turned socialists might yearn for a return to a propertied state (albeit collectivized), and better-fed, better-skilled workers might desire to more fully enjoy their work. But to the Wobblies, the negation of their powerlessness, beginning with control over the conditions of their labor, was the content of their dream.

This focus led Wobblies to some rather precocious insights. In April and May 1911, the IWW journal *Solidarity* ran two articles warning

workers of the writings of Frederick Winslow Turner. The articles pointed out that scientific management was one more attempt by the forces of capital to dehumanize and enslave workers by confiscating from them knowledge of their jobs. This warning, of course, went unheeded in the mainstreams of both the socialist movement and organized labor; each group in its own way focused on attaining for the worker the fruits of power rather than power itself.³⁸

The attitude of the Wobblies and the working-class left toward the socialist parties and political action in general is often misconstrued or oversimplified. Certainly, the thrust of their organization was toward struggle centered on the economic field, and there is little argument that mutual mistrust and animosity created a wedge between them and many within both the Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party. Undoubtedly, by the time William Haywood was recalled from the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party in 1913, the schism was deep and permanent, and over the next seven to eight years (the period which marked the IWW's last serious impact on the labor scene), the IWW was dominated by forces openly hostile to political action. However, Haywood did not end his formal ties with the Socialist Party until seven years after the formation of the IWW and, at least during this period, the attitude of many Wobblies toward political action was far from antagonistic. As should become evident from the following analysis, the term *syndicalist* cannot, therefore, be applied uncritically to all segments of the IWW, as much of Wobbly thinking was clearly within a socialist tradition akin to that of Eugene Debs.³⁹

If a proper description of antipolitics Wobblies could be made, it would depict them as radical extensions of Gompers's brand of trade unionists—pure, simple, and militant, mixed with a firm belief in industrial rather than craft organization. Frank Bohn, collaborator with William Haywood on the widely distributed pamphlet *Industrial Socialism*, noted that the greatest opposition to cooperation with socialists on the political field came not from confirmed anarchists who, "having a point of view and a philosophy they can be reasoned with," but from "those who make anti-politics a fetish," and who look upon the political socialists, rather than the forces of capitalism, as the true enemy.⁴⁰ These Wobblies viewed the political socialists, their parties, and electoral campaigns as important parts of the capitalists' machinery which oppressed the workers. Furthermore, like Gompers, all Wobblies viewed even the most well-intentioned of the political so-

cialists as trying to do for the workers what the workers must do for themselves.

The antipolitics Wobblies were struggling for “more and for all” by attacking what they believed to be the heart of the beast—the structure of the productive order. “We are interested in an industrial change,” they wrote, “and therefore we use only industrial methods.”⁴¹ If, they argued, the IWW was to focus on political organization and the capture of the state, it would lead to the perpetuation of a situation in which the workers were either organized antagonistically along craft lines or not organized at all. This would leave the proper organization of the worker for some future socialist order, an unenviable prospect for working-class socialists bent on the self-organization and liberation of the proletariat. Furthermore, however undesirable the Wobblies considered a political solution to labor’s problem, they viewed its likelihood as even more improbable. Vincent St. John, the most prominent of the antipolitics Wobblies, observed, “It is impossible for anyone to be a part of the capitalist state and to use that machinery of the state in the interests of the workers. All they can do is to make the attempt, and to be impeached—as they will be—and furnish object lessons to the workers of the class character of the state.”⁴²

To many a Wobbly, political relationships were but the “effect” of economic relationships; to change an effect does not change the “cause.”⁴³ To tamper with an effect (the state) was further viewed as an act of futility and naiveté which would, at best, invite the retaliation of the economic powers.

This total rejection of political action was not shared by others in the IWW, including William Haywood, and was clearly rejected by friends such as Debs. In contrast to St. John, the political Wobbly simply deemphasized political action and focused on the subordinate—rather than dysfunctional—role to be played by the political party. “The great mission of our socialist city office holders,” Frank Bohn remarked, “is to go in, do the best they can and then come out on the city hall steps and tell the working class what they cannot do and why.”⁴⁴ It was the assertion of these Wobblies that the struggle for socialism “will be won by the revolutionary class with the help of the party; not by the party with the help of the union.”⁴⁵ It is interesting that in their pamphlet *Industrial Socialism*, Haywood and Bohn describe their approach as “Marxian,” meaning that it is emphatically nonreformist and based on the self-liberation of the working class.⁴⁶

The history of political struggle within the IWW is further illuminating. At its founding convention, the forces supporting political action were at their strongest, as was the influence of Daniel De Leon. The language and tone of the original IWW preamble was clearly influenced by the SLP leader (although probably written by one T. J. Hagerty, a rebel Catholic priest and union militant).⁴⁷ The historian Paul Brissenden credits De Leon with influencing the founders of the IWW to reject "boring from within" as a strategy for the working-class left, and with the insertion of a political clause in the preamble.⁴⁸ At least during the formative years of the organization, a tactical and theoretical consensus seemed to hold.

In its first year of existence, no strong opposition to political action surfaced within the IWW, and indeed, at the 1906 convention, the De Leonite faction united with the St. John faction to depose what they mutually viewed as a corrupt and ineffectual leadership.⁴⁹ By 1908, however, the issue of political action versus direct action did make its appearance at the annual convention. Outnumbered by their opponents, the advocates of political action withdrew, under the leadership of De Leon, and established their own rival organization—the so-called Detroit IWW. The victors, often identified as the antipolitics forces, revised the preamble and distanced themselves from political action. Yet, the expulsion of the De Leon forces from the IWW was done more out of fear of an SLP takeover than out of opposition to the notion of political action.⁵⁰ As mentioned previously, William Haywood remained on the Socialist Party National Executive Committee until his recall in 1913. If the actions of the IWW were exclusively industrial from 1908 forward (as they were prior to 1908 as well), it was more a matter of tactics and disposition than theoretical judgment.

Of course, politically oriented Wobblies such as Haywood did not mourn the loss of the De Leonites. Though De Leon and his adherents did not reject the notion that workers, through their unions, would be the prime initiators of socialism, they did insist that only through the party and the mediation of correct theory could workers gain the requisite consciousness to carry out their mission. Political action in the De Leonite sense implied the complete subordination of the worker to the party, an idea naturally repugnant to men like Haywood who placed such great emphasis on the self-education of the proletariat. In his autobiography, Haywood bitterly remarked that "De Leon's only contact with the workers was through the ideas with which he wished to 'in-

doctrinate' them."⁵¹ Frank Bohn, himself a former SLP member, summed up the political working-class militant's objection to De Leon when he observed that workers demand "decent treatment from their teachers while they are learning."⁵²

To the politically oriented Wobbly, the struggle for socialism was centered in the day-to-day struggle of the worker. While the party might play a constructive role in elucidating the finer points of socialist theory, once socialism had imbedded itself in the unions, the party would become "a mere phase of the labor movement."⁵³

The union and the party together make war upon the enemy, the capitalist class. The fight is, first of all, a shop fight. It takes place at the point of production where the workers are at present enslaved. Until this is understood there can be no real understanding of socialism. To understand the world and the world's struggle we must understand it through shop windows.⁵⁴

If an independent role was ascribed to the political party, it was in the neutralization of the capitalist state, "to seize the powers of government and thus prevent them from being used by the capitalist against the worker."⁵⁵ However, while control of the state was viewed as "absolutely necessary" to ensure a proletarian victory,⁵⁶ the power of the state, once in the hands of the working class, was seen as being of little use to the workers in the positive construction of the socialist society.

There is this justification for political action and that is to control the forces of the capitalists that they use against us; to be in position to control the power of government so as to totally abolish the secret service and the force of detectives. That is the reason that you want the power of government. That is the reason that you should fully understand the power of the ballot.⁵⁷

Evidently, among Wobblies who did not rule out the necessity of political action, any role for the political party beyond the neutralization of the political state was unthinkable. The positive aspects of socialism were to be constructed and instituted by the workers in the shops and through their unions. The Eastern IWW paper, *Solidarity*, which did not reject political action (and was even accused by a reader from Spokane of "flirting with a fake political party"), offered the following admonition:

We find many working men and women, members and supporters of the Socialist Party, who are obsessed with the idea that the working class can vote its way into the cooperative commonwealth. To our minds that is an insidious and dangerous illusion. It tends to develop in them a fatal "waiting habit" by which they come to look for salvation "from on high" via the politician, rather than from below through working class activity and organization on the economic field.⁵⁸

Debs's support for political action was based on a belief in the potential of American democracy and in the use of the ballot as a weapon in the hands of a united and resolute working class. He felt real freedom was absent in an America dominated by the forces and institutions of wage slavery, but he believed that the American political tradition was such that citizens could still "indulge in the exhortation of liberty."⁵⁹ Furthermore, as he was fond of asserting, "Labor has the ballot. It has redeeming power."⁶⁰ Debs explicitly said that the potential of the ballot and political action went beyond the neutralization of the police powers of the state; it was perceived as a weapon "strong enough not only to disarm the enemy, but to drive that enemy entirely from the field."⁶¹

To the antipolitics Wobbly, politics was a snare and a delusion which could be safely ignored in favor of militant struggle on the shop level. The state, perceived as the police arm of capitalism, would diminish in size and strength as the economic institutions of capitalism were captured or transformed by the workers. William Haywood agreed with these Wobblies on the functions of the state yet understood that its powers often existed independently of their economic source. When one deals with social structures and relationships, an effect is not always altered by a change in its cause; the more politically oriented Wobbly thus understood the necessity of mounting an independent attack on the state.

Debs went beyond this formulation and declared that a proletariat capable of capturing the state was also capable of transforming it and using it toward its own ends. The possibility of legislating the control of industry into the hands of the working class was not inconceivable.

The ideal Debsian party, while potentially an active agent in the liberation of the working class, was not akin to the authoritarian party of De Leon or the bureaucratic party of Hillquit. In Debs's mind, a socialist party could never substitute itself for the working class but could merely inspire it, aid it, and speak for its interests.⁶² Furthermore, Debs's

attitude toward leadership contrasted sharply with De Leon's belief in the iron rule of correct principles. "If I have the slightest capacity for leadership," Debs said, "I can only give evidence of it by leading you to rely upon yourselves."⁶³

While Debs's ideal party was not, strictly speaking, conceived of as purely of the working class, membership was to be recruited largely from proletarian ranks. Debs had no pathological fear of intellectuals, but he did assert that "the intellectuals in [party] office should be the exception as they are in the rank and file."⁶⁴ To Debs, economic and political truths were easily perceived by the struggling masses, and organizational structures could be transformed, adapted, and controlled by resolute men and women willing to do so. If there was danger in political organization, it was the danger brought about through the delegation of responsibility to a small number of people. This, he believed, imperiled popular control.

I believe too in rotation in office. I confess to a prejudice against officialism and a dread of bureaucracy. I am a thorough believer in the rank and file, and in ruling from the bottom up instead of being ruled from the top down. The natural tendency of officials is to become bosses. They come to imagine that they are indispensable and unconsciously shape their acts to keep themselves in office.⁶⁵

Working-class radicals of a Debsian or Wobbly persuasion viewed existing political institutions as that set of relationships whose purpose it was to protect private property. Government, in their minds, presupposed class rule. Without class rule, there would be "industrial government," whose function it was to "manage production and to establish and conduct the great social institutions required by civilized humanity." They never conceived of industrial government as the class rule of the proletariat; their use of the term implied the total absence of power relationships between groups. Their formula foresaw no transitional phase; while many of those institutions which existed under capitalism might exist under socialism, they would be qualitatively transformed, no longer being "prostituted for the protection of capitalist interest."⁶⁶

Not surprisingly, law and legal institutions were singled out as the most pernicious and effective weapons at the disposal of the capitalists. Even Debs, who believed in the ballot and political action, had little but contempt for the judiciary. As opposed to the more represen-

tative branches of government, which he viewed as having a potential for progressive and democratic use, Debs saw the courts as the unswerving foe of the working class, having martyred the Haymarket Eight, destroyed the American Railway Union and, through the use of the injunction, continued to be "deadly to trade unions . . . operating noiselessly and with unerring precision."⁶⁷ Haywood described the Supreme Court as the "Gibraltar of Capitalism"⁶⁸ and perceived law in general as the legitimation of capitalist privilege and working-class oppression.

In North America, the workers behold a great mass of laws, old and new, which they have been carefully taught to respect and obey. These laws were made by the political and legal servants of the masters. They were created for the purpose of protecting property which existed long before the law gave the owners a "right" to it. Yet all the rights which the capitalists claim are based on these laws. As soon as the workers determine to abolish them, or ignore them, the capitalists' right to what the workers have produced will cease to exist."⁶⁹

Yet, citing his belief in organization, Haywood refused to describe himself as an anarchist.⁷⁰ His vision of the socialist future, while clearly influenced by syndicalist models, was in line with traditional socialist thinking of the period. He conceived of government under socialism as ceasing its function of being a coercive institution, concerning itself instead with the management of industry and education "and with other public activities which are of benefit to the workers."⁷¹ Furthermore, the idea of functional representation appealed strongly to the Wobblies. They envisioned legislative bodies composed of "men and women representing the different branches of industry and their work would be directed to improving the conditions of labor, to minimize the expenditure of labor power, and to increase production."⁷²

In a society based upon the "freedom of the individual to develop his powers,"⁷³ the Wobbly foresaw little difficulty in creating proper incentives for labor. Workers would naturally gravitate toward that work which they would do best, and each worker would be most "fit in doing what he would want to do."⁷⁴ But like other socialists of their day, left or right, Wobblies accepted functional job categories, and though they were apt to speak of fully developing the individual's powers, they offered no plan for the reorganization of the division of labor beyond the dissolution or democratization of managerial functions.

Neither Debs nor the Wobblies viewed state ownership as a transition to socialism. It was, in Haywood and Bohn's words, "administration from the top."⁷⁵ A popular IWW pamphlet observed that were a socialist government to come into possession of the nation's industry, it would be faced with two undesirable alternatives: either organizing the shops for the workers or maintaining existing economic structures. In neither case would the workers gain a recognition of their powers or accrue any training in self-management.⁷⁶ Likewise, when asked by a congressional committee what legislation might be looked on favorably by his organization, Haywood replied that no part of the IWW program could ever be legislated by Congress.⁷⁷ In a rebuke of reformist socialists, another Wobbly pamphlet put forward an appraisal of government ownership noteworthy not only for its affinity to the AFL position but also for its remarkable anticipation of critiques of postrevolutionary Russian economic development.

We conclude that government ownership is but a phase, a capitalist development identical in essence with that of private monopoly or trustification of industry. The training of the wage slaves is essentially the same in either instance, and the same necessity of those slaves organizing as a class against their employers would exist under complete government ownership as it does under partial government ownership and under privately owned industries.⁷⁸

Working-class radicals were ever aware of efforts to rephrase socialist thinking in order to make it compatible with reformist and middle-class norms and proposals. That future oppressors of their class might call themselves socialists was hardly unthinkable. In response to these fears, the radical working-class left held to an unbending vision of a future egalitarian order which was both the conscious creation of the working class and the complete negation of capitalist society. Debs exemplified this tradition when he asserted that even if a democratically elected socialist administration were in power, there would be "no material change in the conditions of the people until we have a new social system based upon the mutual economic interests of the whole people; until you and I and all of us collectively own those things that we collectively need and use."⁷⁹

Debs and the Wobblies differed in their respective appraisals of the political party as a truly working-class organization and in their understanding of politics as an arena for working-class action. Haywood and

other Wobblies were skeptical of the proletariat's ability to compete effectively in the political arena given the large number of those electorally disenfranchised within its ranks, the desperation of their suffering, and the understanding that politics was an alien terrain to the workers whose lives were, in Haywood's words, "altogether industrial."⁸⁰ In the Wobbly view, working-class action must proceed from the workshops, the factories, and the mines, those arenas whose rules, social relations, and hellish conditions were known and understood best—and so well—by the workers. To the extent that the IWW endorsed political action, it was both an act of necessity and a gamble. It took little insight to conclude that so repressive a force as the state could not be ignored, and the Wobblies gambled that a working-class socialist party might have a limited role to play.

At the same time, Wobblies viewed all aspects of the bourgeois world, including persons and organizations appearing sympathetic to the workers' cause, with suspicion. They perceived laws, institutional structures, and dominant cultural patterns as sinister traps whose dangers, while not apparent, were present and real nonetheless. To the Wobbly, the working class stood alone: alone in its ability to perceive reality and its own potential, alone in its mission of liberating itself and humanity. As one Wobbly pamphlet explained:

The workers of the world . . . will learn to avoid the mistakes they would make should they depend on forces other than their own for the solution of the world's problems. Agencies and institutions deriving their lease of existence from the industrial masters of today cannot be looked to for support. They may feign being in favor of radical changes in the effects—they will, however, strenuously and violently oppose any attempt at destroying the base of the cause.⁸¹

Debs's attitude toward his environment was clearly more ambiguous. Workers, like the America they lived in, were full of unfulfilled promise. Debs never doubted their capacity for self-development. A determined, democratically organized working class, imbued with a socialist vision of society, could succeed in giving new life to a fallen political order. Debs was apt to play down the realities of American political life in favor of the possibilities. He saw promise in class-biased structures and institutions (always with the exception of the courts) and attempted to make the American myth work for, rather than against, the underclasses. The substance of the differences that separated Debs

from the Wobblies can be seen further in their respective positions on the issues of violence and direct action.

To the Wobbly, the primary task of militant workers and their organization was the continuation and intensification of struggle. Wobblies viewed struggle as both the source of a radical working-class consciousness and the means by which the workers would improve their lot under the existing capitalist order. "The prosperity of a labor organization," Haywood asserted, "is measured by its activity. . . . Action against exploitation requires agitation, publicity, strikes, boycotts, political force, all the elements and expressions of discontent. Discontent is life. It impels to action. Contentment means stagnation and death."⁸² To Haywood, and even more so to the Wobbly who ruled out political action of any sort, sabotage and violence were among the valid means of continuing the struggle; "Its necessity," Elizabeth Gurley Flynn wrote, "is its excuse for existence."⁸³

As Vincent St. John testified before the Industrial Relations Commission, a strike would be inopportune if conditions were not favorable or the desired results could not be hoped for. Under such conditions, he explained, the IWW would advocate slow-ups, turning out of inferior work, the other acts of sabotage so as to "destroy the possible chance for revenue or profit accruing to the owners."⁸⁴ Elizabeth Gurley Flynn described such behavior as being "to the class struggle what guerrilla warfare is to the battle."⁸⁵

It is difficult to determine what Wobblies actually advocated when they spoke of sabotage. Haywood, perhaps taunting his congressional inquisitors, said that sabotage was little more than the workers' refusal to aid their bosses in robbing the public. In respect to violence, he further argued, "There is nothing more violent that you can do to the capitalist than to drain his pocketbook."⁸⁶ On the other hand, St. John, who often expressed the more arrogant and alienated boldness of the IWW's antipolitics wing, wrote rather frankly that the IWW aimed to use tactics "that will get the results sought with the least expenditure of time and energy,"⁸⁷ and that he himself would countenance violence against persons.⁸⁸

Violence was often the norm in American labor struggles, and the uniqueness of the IWW was that it was prepared openly to acknowledge the rules by which industrial oligarchs and their political allies chose to play. The *Industrial Worker* of Spokane, which tended to reflect the most militant Wobbly perspectives, issued a clarification on

the question of violence and sabotage. It maintained that "sabotage does not seek nor desire to take human life" and that as a revolutionary tactic, it is a poor alternative to "Solidarie action," which is "mightier than the courageous acts of a few."⁸⁹ Indeed, even St. John's further reflections on the question had a decidedly moderate tone and could have been uttered by Gompers or other accommodationist labor leaders of the day.

Not that the Industrial Workers of the World are advocating the destruction of life to gain any particular point . . . because the destruction of life is not going to gain any point, and if life happens to be lost in strikes that we are implicated in, the blame is generally, and has been up to date, on the other side. But we are not going to tell our membership to allow themselves to be shot down and beat up like cattle. Regardless of the fact that they are members of the working class, they still have a duty which they owe to themselves and their class of defending themselves whenever they are attacked and their life is threatened. Violence is not always the choosing of the working class; as a general rule it is forced on them as a simple act of self defense. They have to strike back when they are struck at and that is the idea the organization is trying to educate the workers into.⁹⁰

The IWW accepted violence and sabotage as it accepted the class struggle. Such acts were seen as an essential reality of industrial life—not to be ignored, but to be incorporated into the general approach to the problem. Many Wobblies (the songwriter and agitator Joe Hill comes to mind) indulged rather foolishly in the celebration of violence. However, at no time did Wobblies perceive violence as serving any end other than expediency. To the Wobbly, sabotage played no great educational function in the manner that the "propaganda of the deed" did for some anarchists. It was, as the *Industrial Worker* observed, "a means that under certain conditions might be done away with and the ends still be gained."⁹¹ Debs, however, could not subscribe to even this utilitarian acceptance of the tactic.

Eugene Debs lacked any and all notions of a subproletariat or a criminal class independent of the working class. He viewed lawbreakers as but the most unfortunate and desperate elements of the proletariat. Their crimes were direct results of the debasement of the worker under capitalism; they were acts of defiance against the system on the level of the individual. "Having still a spark of pride and self-respect," he observed, "they steal and are sent to jail."⁹² Yet, Eugene

Debs rejected sabotage as a tactic of the working-class movement. Whereas moderate socialists such as Spargo and Berger eschewed such acts for their impropriety and illegality, Debs rejected them because of the harm they would do to the developing working-class movement.

As a revolutionist, I can have no respect for capitalist property laws, nor the least scruple about violating them. I hold all such laws to have been enacted through chicanery, fraud, and corruption, with the sole end in view of dispossessing, robbing, and enslaving the working class. But this does not imply that I intend making an individual lawbreaker of myself and butting my head against the stone wall of existing property laws. That might be called force, but it would not be that. It would be mere weakness and folly.⁹³

As we have seen, Debs shared with the Wobblies a profound belief in the development through struggle of a mass radical working-class consciousness as a prerequisite for the destruction of capitalism. Such a development presupposed a movement as collectivist in its tactics as in its ideology. Wobblies, as discussed previously, tacitly agreed to this point in their understanding that individual acts of violence and sabotage were not to be preferred to "solidarie action" and were, at best, matters of expediency. However, they articulated no strong objections to these actions. Perhaps because such objections might either be misconstrued as a capitulation to a set of dominant ethics which they abhorred, or might obfuscate the retaliatory nature of such behavior (the real issue, in their minds, being capitalist and state violence), they were often loud in their acceptance of such means of struggle. Furthermore, in an organization based on a philosophy of constant and militant conflict, despair and perplexity over the uneven development of working-class consciousness often led to an arrogant elitism which contradicted sharply with the IWW's own democratic pretensions. "Our task," the *Industrial Worker* asserted, "is to develop the conscious intelligent minority to the point where they will be capable of carrying out the imperfectly expressed desires of the toiling millions . . . hopelessly stupid and stupidly hopeless."⁹⁴

Debs could accept no such theoretical wavering. Sabotage and direct action were the "tactics of anarchist individualists and not of Socialist collectivists." In his opinion, such acts of individual resistance did "violence to the class psychology of the workers"; they could not "be successfully inculcated as mass doctrine." The liberation of the working class would come from the "power inherent in themselves as

a class''; realization of that power could not be brought about through acts which reinforced notions of individual salvation.⁹⁵

This clear and emphatic rejection of direct action was in many ways a departure by Debs from his eclecticism in the matter of tactics, a tolerance of differences which allowed him to speak for diverse segments of the movement simultaneously. But then, the question of violence and sabotage was not a purely tactical matter to Debs. It involved a theoretical question which reflected on the essence of his understanding of what a socialist movement stood for. Socialism was, for Debs, a popular and democratic collectivism in a collectivist age. It rejected and transcended the archaic individualism inherent in populism and certain types of anarchism and sought to embody the struggle of a class consciously moving toward a new and better future of its own making. What motivated Debs on this issue was not an unqualified belief in existing "democratic" institutions. Rather, he held to a firm understanding of the importance of consciousness in the socialist equation, and collective struggle and education as the source of that consciousness. In line with this thinking, Debs accepted the strike, the electoral battle, and even the future possibility of open mass insurrection as viable tactical options for the working class. At the same time, he looked upon sabotage and direct action, "tactics which appeal to stealth and suspicion," as unacceptable because they "cannot make for solidarity."⁹⁶

The expulsion of Bill Haywood from the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party in 1913 signaled the withdrawal of one segment of the militant working-class left from the socialist scene. For the remainder of the decade, the Wobblies would content themselves with the industrial struggle. During the years of Wilsonian repression, they were a major target of the forces of reaction. The state they ignored was the instrument of their destruction. Debs too was a victim of the president's vindictiveness and intolerance.

The fate of these working-class radicals is unique among American socialists. While others, from Victor Berger to the Communists, were persecuted by the political center and right, their subsequent disappearance from the political scene can be linked at least in part to their internal shortcomings and failures. Whereas the reformist Marxists merged, both in theory and practice, with the mainstream of progressive liberalism, American Communists had an almost pathological tendency to discredit themselves through blind obedience to the Stalinist

line and a contempt for the ever developing sensibility of their rank and file.

However, the radical variants of working-class socialism were clearly expelled from American society in a nakedly shameful fashion. Their defeat came at a time when they had neither lost their vitality nor compromised their integrity. As the most promising of socialist variants, they offered an outlook on both revolution and reform which could have served a growing movement well. Their surgical removal from the American polity is the single satisfying explanation of their failure.

To be sure, within the more formalized Marxist circles of left-wing socialism, a perspective did arise which facilitated the subjugation of radical socialism to Stalinism and failure. In its earlier forms, as found in the writings of Louis Boudin, it appeared as an intellectual complement to the more emotive insights of Debs. In the writings of Louis Fraina, however, it took complicating turns which had tragic implications. It is to these theoretical endeavors that we now turn.

NOTES

1. Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969), p. 147.

2. Ibid.

3. Frank Bohn and William D. Haywood, *Industrial Socialism* (Chicago: Kerr, 1910), pp. 5-6.

4. William Haywood, "Pick and Shovel Pointers," *International Socialist Review* [ISR] 11 (February 1911):458.

5. Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, p. 152.

6. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, p. 9.

7. Ibid., p. 10.

8. Eugene V. Debs, "Outlook for Socialism in the U.S.," *ISR* 1 (September 1900):135.

9. Despite his consistently left position, all shades of socialists tended to claim Debs as one of their own. To Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the Wobbly turned Communist, he was *the* "American Bolshevik"; Emma Goldman once exclaimed, "Why Mr. Debs, you are an anarchist!"; and Lincoln Steffens dubbed him the "keeper of the socialist heaven." In *Debs*, ed. Ronald Radosh (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 103, 105, 115.

10. Eugene V. Debs, "How I Became a Socialist," *N.Y. Comrade*, April 1902.

11. Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*,

4 vols. (New York: International, 1975), 2:225. For accounts of the ARU and the Pullman strike, see Foner, 2:254–78 passim; Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973), pp. 78–96, 139–40 passim; and Almont Lindsey, *The Pullman Strike* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

12. Debs, "How I Became a Socialist."

13. Ibid.

14. During Debs's imprisonment, he received a copy of *Capital* from the visiting Victor Berger. Ibid.

15. Eugene V. Debs, "Unionism and Socialism," in *Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs*, introduction by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (New York: Heritage, 1948), p. 109.

16. In speaking of a mother sending her young child to work in a factory, Debs observed, "To know just how that feels one must have precisely that experience." *Writings and Speeches*, p. 123.

17. Eugene V. Debs, "Revolution," *N.Y. Worker*, 27 April 1905.

18. Eugene V. Debs, "Unionism and Socialism," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 101.

19. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, p. 36.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 40.

22. Haywood, "Pick and Shovel Pointers," p. 458.

23. Vincent St. John, *The I.W.W.: Its History, Structure and Methods*, rev. ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), p. 19.

24. While calling for one union of all workers, the IWW also recognized the need for semiautonomous units within the different trades. The Wobbly principle was "One union of all workers in an industry, all industries in one union." Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, p. 41.

25. Ibid., p. 43. More than anything else, the general strike appeared as the logical tactic to those workers for whom the ballot was of no use—that is, immigrants, blacks, children, and transients. The strike "makes them eligible to legislate for themselves where they are most interested in changing conditions, namely the place where they work." Ibid.

26. Ibid., p. 47.

27. Debs, "Unionism and Socialism," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 101.

28. [William E. Trautmann], *The I.W.W., One Big Union: The Greatest Thing on Earth* (Chicago: IWW, n.d.), p. 21. Consider the following statement by St. John for both its affinity to traditional labor strategies and its focus on worker control. "The organization . . . has a twofold function. It has to be able to handle the everyday problems of the workers which is one of shorter hours, better wages, and improved shop conditions, and ultimately the education of the workers, so that they can assume control of industry. The fundamental purpose of the organization is to drill, have the workers drilled, and

to educate themselves so they can control industry; and as a training school for that task, the everyday struggle of the workers is the first struggle in front of the organization." U.S. Congress, Senate, *Commission on Industrial Relations: Report and Testimony* 54th Cong., 1st Session, 1915-1916, 20:1449.

29. [Trautmann], *One Big Union*, p. 30.

30. See Eugene V. Debs, "The Western Labor Movement," *ISR* 3 (November 1902):257-65.

31. Debs, "Unionism and Socialism," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 110. It should be clear that Debs was hardly a De Leonite socialist. At the founding convention of the IWW, Debs made a strong appeal for socialist unity yet found time to criticize the SLP leader for not appealing to workers in the "right spirit." The organization of the revolutionary working class, he asserted, must be "class conscious," "uncompromising," "of the rank and file," and must "appeal to the intelligence of the workers." Debs was, in his own words, "opposed to the fakir, and . . . opposed to the fanatics." For the text of Debs's entire speech, see *Proceedings of the Founding Convention of the I.W.W.* (New York: Merit, 1969):142-47.

32. Debs, "Unionism and Socialism," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 97.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

34. Eugene V. Debs, "Craft Unionism," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 180.

35. Eugene V. Debs, "The Socialist Party's Appeal," *The Independent* (July-December 1908).

36. To Debs and to most Wobblies, however, struggle within an industrial union was not the single harbinger of socialist consciousness but merely the key ingredient in a process involving study, agitation, and confrontation.

37. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, p. 22.

38. Covington Hall, "Schmidt the Ox-Man," *Solidarity*, 18 April 1911, and "Scientific Skinning," *Solidarity*, 8 May 1911.

39. In searching for principled syndicalists, it is best to consult the early writings of Foster and the histories of the Syndicalist League of North America and the International Trade Union Education League. See Foner, *History*, 4:415-34.

40. Frank Bohn, "Is the I.W.W. to Grow?" *ISR* 12 (July 1911):42-43.

41. *Misconceptions of the I.W.W.* (n.p.: Labor Defense League, 1918).

42. Vincent St. John, "Political Parties and the I.W.W.," in *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology*, ed. Joyce Kornbluh (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 43.

43. *Misconceptions of the I.W.W.*

44. Frank Bohn, "The Socialist Party and City Government," *ISR* 12 (November 1911):278.

45. Frank Bohn, "The Ballot," *ISR* 10 (June 1910):1120.

46. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, introduction.

47. Paul F. Brissenden, *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1919), p. 79.

48. The original preamble of the IWW calls for struggle "on the political as well as the industrial field." After the expulsion of the De Leon faction, the preamble was revised and the reference to political action omitted. However, the revised preamble does not reject political action explicitly. Original and revised text are found in Brissenden, *I.W.W.*, pp. 351-52.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-53.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-42.

51. William P. Haywood, *Bill Haywood's Book*, (N.Y.: International, 1958), pp. 183-84.

52. Frank Bohn, "The Failure to Obtain Socialist Unity," *ISR* 8 (December 1908):753.

53. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, p. 45.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

56. *Ibid.*

57. William D. Haywood, "The General Strike," *ISR* 11 (May 1911):683-84. On the whole, Haywood felt that electoral politics were impractical for working people, their lives being "altogether industrial." *Testimony of William Haywood Before the Industrial Relations Commission* (Chicago: IWW, n.d.), p. 15. However, even in his last appearance before a Socialist Party convention, he insisted that he had always urged "that every working man use the ballot at every opportunity." "What Haywood Says About Political Action," *ISR* 13 (February 1913):622.

58. "The Policy of Solidarity on the Position of the I.W.W. Regarding Political Action," *Solidarity*, 23 July 1910.

59. Eugene V. Debs, "Liberty," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 10.

60. Eugene V. Debs, "Labor Omni Vincit," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 105.

61. Debs, "Unionism and Socialism," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 105.

62. Eugene V. Debs, "Speech of Acceptance," *ISR* 4 (May 1904):692.

63. Debs, "Revolutionary Socialism," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 215.

64. Eugene V. Debs, "Sound Socialist Tactics," *ISR* 12 (February 1912):486.

65. *Ibid.*

66. [Trautmann], *I.W.W.*, p. 32.

67. Debs, "Unions and Socialism," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 105.

68. William D. Haywood, "Shots from the Workshop," *ISR* 11 (April 1911):588.

69. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, p. 12.

70. *Testimony of William Haywood*, p. 35.

71. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, p. 45.

72. Ibid.
73. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, pp. 39–40.
74. *Testimony of William Haywood*, p. 40.
75. Bohn and Haywood, *Industrial Socialism*, p. 46.
76. *Misconceptions of the I.W.W.*
77. *Testimony of William Haywood*, p. 19.
78. B. H. Williams, *Eleven Blind Leaders: or Practical Socialism and Revolutionary Tactics* (Chicago: IWW, n.d.), p. 17.
79. Eugene V. Debs, "The Issue," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 298.
80. *Testimony of William Haywood*, p. 15.
81. [Trautmann], *I.W.W.*, p. 21.
82. Haywood, "Shots from the Workshop," p. 588.
83. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Sabotage: The Conscious Withdrawal of the Workers Industrial Efficiency* (Cleveland: IWW, 1916), unpaginated.
84. U.S. Senate Industrial Relations Commission, *Report and Testimony*, 20:1450–51.
85. Flynn, *Sabotage*.
86. *Testimony of William Haywood*, pp. 26, 25.
87. St. John, *The I.W.W.*, p. 17.
88. U.S. Senate, Industrial Relations Commission, *Report and Testimony*, 20:1451.
89. *Industrial Worker*, 23 January 1913.
90. U.S. Senate, Industrial Relations Commission, *Report and Testimony*, 20:1451–52.
91. *Industrial Worker*, 23 January 1913.
92. Eugene V. Debs, "Prison Labor: Its Effects on Industry and Trade," in *Writings and Speeches*, p. 26.
93. Debs, "Sound Socialist Tactics," p. 484.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., p. 485.
96. Ibid., p. 484.

5

The Emergence and Subjugation of the Socialist Left: Boudin and Fraina

American socialism had a first-rate critic of revisionism and defender of a dynamic Marxism in Louis Boudin. A noted constitutional lawyer and mainstay of the Socialist Party's left wing, Boudin was perhaps the most serious student of Marxist theory within the movement. His work *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx in the Light of Recent Criticism* defended the Marxist system in an impressive and original manner.¹ So novel was his explanation of historical materialism that it drew the condemnation of a more dogmatic and deterministic comrade for not asserting that "individual actions can be and must be, explained by historical materialism in the same way as mass actions."² In many ways anticipating a later generation of Marxist scholarship, Boudin was emphatic in ascribing a central role in historical development to ideas.

Boudin's initial explanation of ideas within history is a model of orthodox Marxist clarity. "The ideas on all subjects relating to man in society, including those of right and wrong between man and man, and even man and his god, are changed by man in accordance with and because of . . . changed material conditions of his existence."³ Yet, while rejecting the approach of "idealists" (who would explain all change "by the inherent development of ideas"), Boudin sought to elucidate a theory of history which—while emphasizing the irresistible influence of material conditions—would allow for the conscious role of human action and thought.

Although Boudin believed ideas exerted a "powerful influence," he

nevertheless saw them as the outgrowth of changes in the economic order. Conflicting ideas were to be explained by the conflicting economic interests of opposing classes whose "needs, desires, or aspirations" they respectively serve.⁴ Politics itself is but the reflection of the economic base. "When a new tool makes its appearance, a new political force is born into society."⁵

However, Boudin did not view ideas as totally passive variables in the materialist equation. Whatever their source, their survival is dependent only in part on material conditions. They could become powerful weapons in defense of those sets of economic relationships which help create them and, especially in the hands of "new economic forces," can play a central role in the drama of social change.

The new ideas formulate slowly and make converts even more so. But when the time has come when society has become revolutionized economically, these ideas become a revolutionary factor in themselves and help destroy the old order of things. Not only is the class whose interests lie in the economic changes which gave birth to these ideas fired by these ideas, to such an extent that it often forgets those economic interests themselves and is carried away by the new ideas alone, but neutral classes of society and even people whose interests lie in the opposite direction are carried away by the new ideas and enter the list for the new order of things.⁶

More than other American Marxists of his day, Boudin recognized the creative revolutionary potential of the human mind and imagination. Unlike others, who posited economic conditions as constantly molding and channeling the course and content of human history, Boudin perceived ideas as dynamically interacting with material factors in the shaping of events. Occasioned by changes in the productive order, ideas take on a life of their own. Mediating between human consciousness and concrete reality, they help to elucidate, anticipate, and shape events. Boudin had little patience for those who would wait for the full decay of capitalism before instituting socialism. Revolutionary change becomes viable not when existing structures become untenable but when they cease to be a positive and dynamic force. Marx, he asserted, "says that the revolution occurs when the superstructure of laws, etc., turns from a means of helping production into fetters of production."⁷ The theoretically conscious radical understands that conditions need not be fully ripe for basic change but need only show the potential for ripeness.⁸

But ideas do not develop in a vacuum. They “have their source in the social milieu of . . . society”⁹ and are nurtured by struggle, social conflict, and changes in the productive order. Gradually, the dialectical interplay of struggle and ideas leads the proletariat—the “active” factor in the revolution—to develop its own systematic ideology—“collectivism.”

In forming his ideology, he [the worker] is aided by the very form of his struggle against the old order, which is the collective mass struggle, and the benefits derived therefrom which can only be enjoyed while acting collectively and when organized in accordance with collective principles, and the well organized and developed democratic forms of government and activity; and on the other hand, by the dissolution of the old ideology in general, and in particular by its abandonment by the middle class, the class with whom the working class comes in closest contact.¹⁰

In Boudin’s analysis, the overthrow of the existing order is preceded by the development of working-class consciousness. Consciousness does not come to the proletariat from without; it is dependent on the quality of working-class thought and action. The centrality of theory in Boudin’s equation is quite evident. Ideas help shape the form of struggle, play a valuable role in helping archaic notions reach their final resting place, and are potent weapons in wooing the middle classes—and other neutral elements—over to the socialist cause.

It is illuminating that while Boudin took an active role in Socialist Party politics (siding, until the schism of 1919, consistently with the party’s left), his theoretical work does not concern itself with the relative importance of the party versus the union, or direct action versus electoral participation. What was essential was that struggle ensue, that it be organized collectively and democratically, and that it afford an opportunity for the working class to use its brains along with its brawn. Boudin would later find the vision of Lenin’s obedient cadres, performing revolutionary heroics in accordance with the will of a central committee, as unappealing as the image of the social democratic voter dutifully pulling the party lever. A class actively seeking its own liberation on many fronts cannot be led blindly to theoretical truth. It finds it in due course.

After 1919, Boudin’s writings became increasingly evolutionary in tone as the principled militancy he championed fell victim to the adventurism of the Leninists. By 1924, he was an avowed admirer of the

British Labour Party, arguing that the successes of the Labourites could be linked to their focus on class politics rather than ideology.¹¹

Early utopian socialists rooted their socialism in the hope that the new order would come into being through the voluntary actions of elites. To this, Marx posed the objection that elites, as a class, would never relinquish their privilege; that ideas, the essence of voluntarism, always exist within the framework of real human conditions and social relationships. The ideas which would dominate the thinking of elites would complement their privilege, not condemn it. Hence, Marx postulated that those ideas necessary to transform social relations could never come from above but must crop up from within, or from those very close to, the oppressed classes. In his writings on the subject, Boudin is close to Marx. He realized that the bulk of the ideology capable of dislodging the old order would be rooted in a class which has a thoroughgoing understanding, nurtured by experience, of the evils of capitalism. The component parts of the new ideology might lie below the level of consciousness but would be liberated in times of intense struggle.

Yet, social democrats such as Kautsky and Hillquit emphasized the theoretical backwardness of the masses and argued the need to impose consciousness from without, either through the mysterious guidance of economic developments or through the party and the leadership of those who have solved the puzzle of history. Working under the rule of the most autocratic of regimes, Lenin added to this approach an emphasis on the role of the state as a totally repressive force acting from above which can only be eliminated by an equally repressive force from below. What the social democrat and the Bolshevik shared was a lack of faith in the working class, the conviction that revolution, entered into for the sake of the working class, need not—and often could not—be carried out by the working class alone.

Boudin played down the importance of outside mediation. Even in his analysis of imperialism, he saw only temporary roadblocks, which altered the pace but not the direction of social change. Boudin believed that "capitalism cannot open a new market without making the new territory part of its own system of production." "The mere extension of that system to new fields," he asserted, "cannot save it, for the system would then carry with it its fatal malady to these new fields."¹² No state could be so resourceful as to eliminate struggle in its entirety, and no working class could be so fixated in its thinking as

to be incapable of liberating itself through the dialectical interplay of struggle and theory.

Given the history of the twentieth century, Boudin's analysis bears an element of prophecy. Electoral victories, political coups, strikes, and violent confrontations do not make in themselves for real and meaningful social change. The new order cannot occupy only the physical space abandoned through the decay of the old but must actively dislodge capitalism from the minds of women and men. While other socialists (Daniel De Leon among them) recognized the importance of consciousness, they failed to grasp one essential point: human minds, unlike fortresses, must be convinced, not conquered.

Until April 1917, the outside world was a theoretical abstraction to American socialists. To be sure, the machinations and adventures of their foreign brethren provided ample filler for American socialist periodicals and, undoubtedly, talk of imperialism and the need for worldwide proletarian solidarity was increasingly heard. But a geographical and psychological distance separated the American radical from events on the other side of the Atlantic. American debates over preparedness and foreign aid were hardly as real as the continental debates over the role of a class and its party in time of actual war. The consensus of American socialists, from right to left, was that internal strategies, deeds, and events would seal the fate of the American movement.

Nor did Hillquit or Debs express the sense of betrayal attributed to Lenin on hearing of the virtually unanimous support given the war effort by the German Social Democrats. Despite statements of dismay, Hillquit tended to be forgiving of socialist prowar sentiments on both sides of the European dispute, stating that the movement had not suffered "spiritually or morally" from the negation of long-standing socialist principles.¹³ Eugene Debs, while critical of militarism and war in general, was silent on specifics. Ray Ginger comments on his behavior in the crucial year before American entry into the war: "The conscription act, the Liberty Loan drives, the mounting subsidies to England and France, had all been inaugurated without opposition from Eugene Debs. He was trying to escape the results of war without attacking the measures that made possible the continuation of the war itself."¹⁴ With some exceptions, a similar vagueness on the war issue characterized the antiwar position of most American socialists.

One exception was Louis Boudin. In the early months of 1917, when

American entry into the war appeared more and more certain, the party leadership called an emergency convention to deal with the issue. This meeting was called on April 7, shortly after the congressional declaration of war. Overwhelmingly it endorsed a statement, drafted by Hillquit, which condemned the war as a "mad orgy of death" and placed responsibility for the carnage on the capitalist class in general and the "predatory capitalists" of the munitions industry in particular.¹⁵ Of the 176 votes cast, only 5 supported a prowar resolution drafted by John Spargo.¹⁶

The victorious resolution represented a co-option of the Socialist Party's left by its center. Louis Boudin, ever the principled theorist and ever the suspicious rival of Hillquit, found the statement "utterly worthless as a definitive statement of position" and, as editor of the newly formed left-wing journal *The Class Struggle*, harped on the theoretical vagueness and oversimplified response to difficult issues which the resolution implied.¹⁷

Boudin had published *Socialism and War* a year before, seeking a Marxist explanation of the questions posed by the international rivalries which culminated in the Great War.¹⁸ He asserted that the cause of the Great War was to be found in the nature and development of the economic system of capitalism. He sketched a theory of imperialism and war which anticipated many of the insights being formulated at the same time by Lenin. However, unlike Lenin's scholarly theoretical work, *Socialism and War* was a political study, aimed at helping an active socialist movement to wrestle with a specific war. His analysis of imperialism as a manifestation of late capitalism was a theoretical construct used to explain an immediate nightmare. Consequently, the work lacks the depth and inclusivity of Lenin's. Lenin, laboring with "an eye to the tsarist censorship," subordinated his strong political and polemical inclinations and produced an impressive theoretical study.¹⁹ Boudin, instinctively a theorist, chose the same topic on which to write a polemical treatise. His theory might be loosely summarized as follows: As a historical epoch, capitalism is marked by three stages of development—two of them warlike, one peaceful. In its early period, a developing capitalism ambitiously begins the process of creating a world in its own image; force and state power are handmaidens to the process. In its prime, when its hold on the economic structures of society and the ideology of the age has solidified and has yet to overgrow its national borders, capitalism can afford to

be pacific. Indeed, Boudin observed, in the middle period of capitalism's prime, the naked exploitation of colonies and the phenomenon of imperialist rivalry have little justification or purpose. Adam Smith's notion of free trade precludes special relationships between mother country and colony; imperialism offers but an administrative burden to a capitalist nation during this period.

However, as capitalism matures and ages, as it enters into a new period of development, new markets become a necessity. These markets must be created in the underdeveloped world. Noncapitalist societies must be made capitalist. As a matter of course, these developing capitalist nations (or colonies) seek to produce a share of their own consumer goods. This goal calls for the importation of the means of production from an advanced capitalist power. But modernization is a massive and risky venture: an individual firm cannot participate in the process without insurance against failure or, at the very least, government contracts that guarantee monopolistic control of the market. Modern capitalist states are therefore compelled to step in and secure a safe market for their firms by dominating the political and social life of an underdeveloped nation. If the competition between firms involves contracts, mergers, and bankruptcies, the new competition between nations is marked by international alliances, political domination, and war. "In a word: the disposal of the surplus-product of the modern industrial nations has ceased to be a matter of trade carried on by the individual and has become a matter of armed force, actual or potential, used by large groups called nations. Hence, the phenomenon which we call modern Imperialism."²⁰

Of course, if the seeds of modern war are to be found in the very nature of modern capitalism, Boudin could have logically advocated the abolition of capitalism as the solution to war. Like Lenin, he could have called for transforming international wars into civil wars, or revolutions. However, 1916 was not a year for preaching the final confrontation; left-wing antiwar socialists throughout the world were attempting to lay the groundwork for new beginnings and were not playing out old endings.²¹ Boudin's analysis, while not rejecting socialist support for revolution, were it to occur, assumed a more modest situation.

Particularly as a participant in the American movement, Boudin was aware that socialists could not expect total control over all human circumstances. While they may have desired an end to armed confrontation, their ability to effect such a result was limited. Implicit in Bou-

din's analysis of war was the understanding that a pacific stance or an advocacy of full-scale revolution is, under certain circumstances, an outsider's admission of powerlessness. A more complex strategy was in order for those who, while not lacking in power, were nevertheless unable to dictate the outcome of events.

Boudin argued that barring revolution, socialists must take a position based on the specifics of the war itself. It is, he maintained, a long-standing socialist principle to favor "those wars whose net results would be a strengthening of the forces making for progress, and therefore in the interests of the working class."²² A year later, even while counseling total opposition to a war which he believed met no socialist criteria for involvement, he argued that a socialist response can never be one of indifference. Rather, it must consider revolutionary aims and strategies. As the socialist antiwar campaign increasingly allied itself with pacifist principles and personages,²³ Boudin reminded his readers that the socialist concern was not for the war but for the nature of the world in the peace which would follow. The socialist "may deem it his duty to take a hand in the struggle in order to secure a lasting and just peace for all concerned."²⁴

Of particular interest to Boudin was the freedom of all nations from foreign domination. The radical can never be the strict partisan, even when supporting one side over the other; the total crushing of one nation by another is unacceptable.²⁵ There is a need, he wrote in November 1915, for a special kind of peace: "a peace that would not be within itself the seeds of future wars, or of strife between different nationalities in times of peace which would necessarily becloud the class struggle and retard the great emancipatory movement of the working class."²⁶

The significance of Boudin's statement on war should not go unnoted. In attempting to construct a guideline for socialist behavior in times of international conflict, Boudin underscored the role of socialists as active and real participants in the mainstream of events and not as sideline commentators and doomsday cultists.

Yet, there is a quixotic flavor to Boudin's writing on the war. In terms of the development of American socialist thought, the war and the issues which arose from it were obfuscating factors within the radical movement. The brave, admirable, and near unanimous response of American socialists to the war brought a semblance of unity to the movement which had been lacking ever since William Haywood's recall from the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party and the divisive debates over sabotage and direct action. As long as the

war remained the issue, debate on topics of internal domestic concern was obscured; wars bring unity not only to their patriotic supporters but to their opponents as well. The strong antiwar stand taken by Hillquit and the party's center, and Berger and the party's right, minimized differences with the party's left. Boudin's attempts to construct a left response to the war independent of the center and the right was, in the end, unproductive. Although philosophically clarifying, his differences with Hillquit and Berger were for the most part abstract and theoretical; there was little he might propose, short of all-out revolution, that the others had not already advocated. Even if at times the Hillquit-Berger forces seemed to waver on the war issue, Wilsonian persecution of all nominally antiwar groups made martyrs out of the most vacillating of comrades.²⁷

Boudin's work on the subject did signify the continued effort of the American socialist left to construct a dynamic and creative theoretical alternative to the staid Marxism that dominated the party. The left believed that a movement of the working class, while never operating under circumstances of its own choosing, must nevertheless strive to initiate ideas and events rather than be passively defined by them. However, in creating a semiautonomous role for theory within the movement, the left opened the door to the old sin of sectarianism. If the revisionists of the right focused on the movement at the expense of its vision, elements of the left tended to insist on a theoretical purity even when policy differences with their antagonists were minimal. In Boudin, we see the opening for a left-wing intransigence which came into its own in the writings and person of Louis Fraina.

On the eve of the First World War, the American socialist left had a considerable history and numerous godparents from which to draw ideas and inspiration. From Daniel De Leon, it inherited a concern for the development of consciousness as well as a sectarian inability to cooperate with those with whom it disagreed. From Louis Boudin, it perceived the possibilities of an independent and creative Marxism which alternatively shapes people and forces and is shaped by them. From Debs and the working-class radicals, it learned the need to wed theory and strategy to the underclasses; to have faith in the potential, if not the reality, of the oppressed. And from the IWW, it borrowed the language and spirit of "mass action," that nebulous concept which implied continuous struggle and a qualified rejection of parliamentary activities.

Louis Fraina was the personified embodiment of that tradition. An

Italian immigrant raised on Manhattan's Lower East Side, Fraina was a De Leonite and Socialist Labor Party activist at fifteen, an IWW member at eighteen and—with Max Eastman, W. E. B. DuBois, and Walter Lippmann, among others—an editor and active contributor to the left socialist journal *New Review* at the age of twenty.²⁸ In following developments in his thinking, we can see the flowering of left socialist thought as well as the beginnings of its later subjugation to the logic and prerogatives of the Communist Third International. Despite what will appear to be an irony, there is a deeper consistency in the latter development.

An early contribution (July 1914) by Fraina to *New Review* evaluated De Leon's socialism. It credited the SLP leader with emphasizing class struggle and revolutionary unionism and understanding the need to Americanize the movement. In De Leon, Fraina saw the five basic tenets of revolutionary action which would dominate the thinking of the left over the next half decade: (1) there is a need for revolutionary industrial unionism; (2) all meliorative reforms are to be accomplished solely through union activity; (3) reforms through political action are purposeless and counterproductive; (4) political action has an educational purpose only; and (5) the socialist goal involves the overthrow of political government.

At the same time, Fraina criticized the arrogance and sectarianism of the SLP, the "Caesarian spirit of preferring to be first in a small alpine village to second in Rome." Astutely, he focused on De Leon's emphasis upon the need for revolutionary working-class consciousness while ignoring the dynamic processes which create such consciousness.

The S.L.P. ignored the psychology of struggling workers; its propaganda was couched in abstract formulas; just as its sectarian spirit developed a sort of subconscious idea that revolutionary activity consisted in enunciating formulas. This sectarian spirit produced dogmas, intemperate assertions, and a general tendency toward caricature-ideas and caricature-action; and discouraged men of ability from joining the S.L.P.²⁹

Fraina's socialism stressed the need to create a dynamic, independent socialism, one that unified ideas and deeds, a socialism purged both of scholasticism and opportunism. As a first step, he urged socialists to look inward and reaffirm the movement's belief in the power

of people to shape and control their own destinies. Furthermore, Fraina made a conscious effort to revitalize the dominant Marxism of the movement, which was becoming as much an excuse for fatalism and complacency as for action.

Our own actions are the determining factor in the future of Socialism. We must become more fearless in action and in thought—particularly in self-directed thought. We must use socialist theory to analyse our own actions as well as those of our foes. The socialist movement must become humanized, concern itself more with human emotions and the spiritual reality of life.³⁰

We can see in this statement an element of left socialist thought which clearly separated it from reformist thinking. As long as socialism spoke to classes, as long as it spoke the language of epochs and history, the movement would make only superficial contact with working people. Socialism would be one more “pie in the sky when you die,” as the Wobblies would say. However, by linking socialism with psychological and spiritual concerns, the revolution might gain an immediacy in the minds of underclass individuals that argued against reformism by its very necessity. By permeating the concrete reality of working-class life, socialism would offer the promise of salvation in this world, a realistic grace made meaningful by its synthesis of both the worldly and spiritual. “Economics,” Fraina wrote, “has given us a vision of a new society; psychology will give us a vision of a new humanity.”³¹

A reevaluation of the Marxism of the period was therefore in order. Fraina charged that “on the basis of Marx, socialist propaganda has erected an unreal metaphysical structure of theory and tactics which must be destroyed.” “It matters not,” he added, “whether the structure is ‘revolutionary’ or ‘revisionist.’” Marxism, to Fraina, had ceased to be a living theory, a set of “general principles to be used intelligently, progressively.”³² Instead, it had degenerated into a conservative dogma of “State Socialism” which sought to dominate individuals by its abstractions and heavy emphasis on economic determinants. “The brilliant concept of the materialist conception of history with its full-orbed recognition of the non-economic factors involved in the social process, has in some quarters been distorted into a rigid and preposterous ‘economic determinism.’”³³

The corruption of Marxism at the hands of those who dominated the movement and the need to construct a new paradigm were often-

repeated themes of the socialist left. Tactically, these factors led to the belief that reformist Marxism had to be defeated as a prerequisite to the overthrow of capitalism. This position had an immense significance for the American movement in the wake of the Russian Revolution.

The unity which characterized the movement on the issue of the war continued in the response to the Russian Revolution. As Hillquit would observe over a decade later, "The sentiment in favor of the revolutionary government of the workers and peasants was practically unanimous in all party ranks."³⁴ At that time, Hillquit viewed the event as turning "a new page in history"; Abraham Cahan, the rather moderate and pragmatic editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, compared the revolution with "the coming of the messiah"; the Reverend Norman Thomas described it as the beginning of "the most significant social experiment since the French Revolution."³⁵ But socialist sentiment is best reflected in the remarks of the usually conservative Slavophobic Victor Berger on the first anniversary of the November Revolution:

Solomon said: "There is nothing new under the sun." Solomon did not live to see an industrial democracy. The Soviet government is something really new under the sun. For the first time in the history of this poor old world the working people took the reins in their hands. The new Russian government is the first real democracy.³⁶

However, there was an important difference between the position of the left and that of other socialists on the question of the Russian Revolution. To the moderates, events in Russia represented a foreign—if glorious—occurrence which had symbolic and inspirational significance for the American movement. To the left, however, they were a model for, and justification of, its own revolutionary designs.

In 1921, after the dust of fratricidal conflict had settled and the movement had split into rival socialist and Communist wings, Morris Hillquit presented a more sober and traditional Marxist critique of the Russian Revolution in his work *From Marx to Lenin*. That this critique was aimed at American left wingers as well as at the Bolsheviks is suggested by his comment that it was based on a "Marxian theory of social growth," which he described as "essentially economic and evolutionary."³⁷

The Russian Revolution, Hillquit asserted, was carried out in a land

totally unprepared for socialism and was precipitated by a monstrous war which stimulated revolutionary forces long before their proper time. As the creation of well-meaning revolutionaries, the Russian experiment could hardly be disavowed, but to the extent that it was utterly un-Marxian, Hillquit saw few positive lessons to be learned from it.³⁸ Thus, he attempted to dissociate both Marxist theory and the future socialism of other lands from the Russian experience.

As Hillquit perceived it (rather correctly on this point), the Marxian concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was the advocacy of an essentially democratic form of rule in the interests of a class.³⁹ The Bolsheviks had created not the dictatorship of a class but the dictatorship of a party. This was necessitated by the need to solidify an unnatural alliance between the peasantry and a proletariat still in its infancy.⁴⁰ Yet, having attacked the totalitarian features of Leninism, he proceeded to criticize its popular elements as well. The soviets, Hillquit maintained, were a particularly Russian solution to proletarian organization which had little application in the West. All socialist revolutions must abolish bourgeois institutions to some extent, but "a Socialist government in a country of western civilization can no more adapt the essentially Russian features of the Soviets than it can continue the essentially bourgeois features of parliament."⁴¹

Outlining what were in effect his differences with his own left, Hillquit understood a successful move toward socialism as predicated upon three preconditions: (1) an industrial base; (2) an enlightened working class; and (3) international socialist solidarity. In the West, the missing ingredients—the second and third preconditions—could be achieved only through education, not struggle. Insurrectionary activities, modeled on the Russian experience, would signal a return to "the days of Blanquism."⁴² Hillquit focused on the need for the education of the proletariat under the tutorship of an enlightened party, a party which comprehended the need to keep proper pace with history. Even the Russian people, he concluded, were on the verge of some harsh reevaluations.

The course of Soviet Russia's industrial and political policies once more goes to show the precarious nature of any "leap" over an historical phase of development. The Soviet Regime of Russia undertook a jump beyond the limits of physical possibility. It has to pay a heavy penalty for the levity of its youthful enthusiasm, and to take a fresh, harder start at more realistic beginnings.⁴³

However, the American socialist left did not see the Russian Revolution in this way. Rather, it justified their own position and was a signal for renewed warfare with socialist moderates. In the November–December 1917 issue of *Class Struggle*, a leading left-wing journal, two articles appeared. One, Lenin’s “Political Parties in Russia,” characterized the divisions on the Russian left as between the petit-bourgeois Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries on the one hand, who called for socialism in the distant future, and the class-conscious, proletarian-based Bolsheviks on the other, who steadfastly advocated peace, immediate power to the Soviets, and the arming of the masses.⁴⁴ A second article, by Fraina, analyzed the complacency of American socialist leaders and spoke of the “task of the revolutionary minority within the party to force action.”⁴⁵

From the very beginning, the left saw a reflection of itself in the Russian Revolution. Even the Wobblies, normally rather indifferent to overseas events and by then fairly antagonistic to political socialists, issued a pamphlet which imagined their tactics and aims as projections of Lenin’s. “Imagine the Industrial Workers of the World—the I.W.W.—as having organized American wageworkers in its fold and these workers controlling as well as operating all industries, and you have the same thing the Bolsheviks have practically accomplished in Russian.”⁴⁶

Fraina, in particular, viewed the revolution as a paradigm for socialist action. “As Marx is the source of socialist theory,” he wrote, “so the proletarian revolution in Russia is the source of Socialist practice.” Fraina saw two key components of such practice as “the mass action of the proletariat . . . the dynamic means of the revolution,” and the dictatorship of the proletariat which “ruthlessly annihilates the rights and ideologies of the old regime, particularly when these are expressed in the activity of a counter-revolutionary moderate socialism.”⁴⁷

In 1918, Fraina published *Revolutionary Socialism: A Study in Socialist Reconstruction*.⁴⁸ It emphasized the proletarian base of the coming revolution, the phenomenon of imperialism as a signal that the revolutionary epoch has arrived, and the need to repudiate centrist socialists. The work also attempted to transcend the determinism of the old Marxism by focusing on human consciousness as the complement of objective conditions. If the ruling classes have property as their weapon, Fraina reasoned, the propertyless masses have only “revolutionary en-

ergy and integrity.”⁴⁹ A class so alienated from the institutions of property could easily transcend material conditions and act primarily on the basis of its will alone. Finally, Fraina espoused the need for mass action as a substitute for a discredited and dying parliamentarianism, and as a surer road to revolutionary consciousness.

Mass action is not a form of action as much as it is a process and synthesis of action. It is the unity of all forms of proletarian action, a means of throwing the proletariat, organized and unorganized, in a general struggle against capitalism and the capitalist state. It is the sharp definite expression of the revolt of the workers under the impact of the antagonisms and repressions of Capitalism, of the recurring crises and revolutionary situations produced by the violent end of Imperialism. Mass action is the instinctive action of the proletariat, gradually developing more conscious and organized forms and definite purposes. It is extra-parliamentary in method, although political in purpose and result, and may develop into and be itself developed by parliamentary struggle.⁵⁰

Imperialism had signaled the beginning of the revolutionary age. The events in Russian had suggested as much. Only revolutionary working-class consciousness, Fraina deduced, was absent from the equation. While Lenin viewed the “state” as preventing the flowering of socialist humanity, the American left wing viewed the “party” as standing in the way of mass action and revolution. In the eyes of the left, Hillquit and the mainstream Marxists had erred in assuming the state to be penetrable and adaptable through parliamentary means. By cooperating with and within the state, they had become indistinguishable from it, and their elimination from the political scene became a revolutionary necessity. The purification of the party became the absolute precondition for the conquest of the state.⁵¹

The left’s self-assigned task was a complex one, given the nature of its charges against the party’s leadership. The sins of Hillquit and others were sins of belief and omission rather than commission: they had failed to encourage mass action; they had misunderstood the source of revolutionary consciousness; they were incorrect in their overly positive attitude toward electoral work; and they had not embraced the Russian Revolution as a universal paradigm for revolutionaries. Yet, as James Weinstein points out, “In the American party there were virtually no right wingers in the European sense: i.e., supporters of the war and of the post-war attacks on the Soviet Republic.”⁵²

These attacks on the party's leadership were abstract and, at times, philosophical in nature; the moderates were condemned for what they would not do in the future, given what they had not believed in the past. In their manifesto, the New York left wingers proclaimed: "We believe it is the mission of the Socialist movement to encourage and assist the proletariat to adopt newer and more effective forms of organization and to stir it into newer and more revolutionary modes of action."⁵³

Hillquit, however, could hardly have disagreed too strongly with this statement, nor with the left's demands for increasing support of industrial unionism and mass action. At the same 1917 convention which outlined the party's opposition to the war, the delegates voted overwhelmingly to repeal the "antisabotage clause" which had been a statement of party policy since 1912.⁵⁴ With the entry of the United States into the war, the bulk of the party, leaders and followers, moved steadily leftward. The Russian Revolution effectively solidified and intensified this trend. What separated the two wings of the party were past tendencies and animosities and a long-standing dispute on the nature and source of revolutionary consciousness. This, in 1917 at least, had little programmatic importance, given the heady revolutionary euphoria to which no segment of the party was immune. The differences were hardly those that might stir the blood of those American workers the left was so desperate to reach. As a result, the left built a case against its opponents by accusing them of being what they were not—programmatic right-wing socialists in the European sense. So strained was the left-wing argument that the strongest concrete charge against the party leadership was that its opposition to the war was little more than "petty-bourgeois pacifism."⁵⁵ However true, it was hardly the basis for a split, which was encouraged, and which then followed.

It is further interesting that when two rival Communist parties broke away from the Socialist Party in the late summer of 1919, both adopted as an organizational model the "repudiated" parent party,⁵⁶ as if to emphasize what Fraina had asserted months earlier: that it was "not organization but revolutionary class consciousness" that was the key issue.⁵⁷ The Leninist party—modeled on the prescriptions of *What Is to Be Done?*—was to come only later. At the point of the split, perceived ideological differences were at the core of the dispute.

The American left, represented in the writings of Fraina, bore little resemblance to the Leninist left as it is conventionally understood. Ab-

sent was the rigid organizational framework, the close adherence to the letter of classical texts, and a notion of a vanguard party above and apart from the masses. Indeed, a key goal of the American left was to unite a dynamic Marxism with the reality of working-class struggles. It would seem surprising, therefore, that the American left entered so directly, and willingly, into the Soviet camp.

But this should not be surprising, for the nature of the Leninist appeal during this period bore only the vaguest resemblance to the official Leninism of a decade later (even as it paved the way for the later tradition). The thrust of Lenin's analysis pointed not toward statism but toward direct participatory democracy, the complete transcendence of the bourgeois state. He sought to move directly from the merely "formal" democracy of representative institutions to the "true" democracy of the soviets. His key assumption was that the existing state was utterly impenetrable by the masses and must be abolished by an alternative "state"—in the form of the organizations of the working class—prior to any qualitative reorganization of society. As Nicos Poulantzas has said,

What does Lenin mean by this destruction of the bourgeois state? Unlike Marx, he often reduces the institutions of representative democracy and political freedoms to a simple emanation of the bourgeoisie: representative democracy = bourgeois democracy = dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. They have to be completely uprooted and replaced by direct, rank and file democracy, and mandated, recallable delegates—in other words, by the genuine proletarian democracy of soviets.⁵⁸

Both Russian Leninism and social democracy were therefore based on the premise that a single line of attack against the capitalist state was in order. Social democrats assumed the promise of democracy to be its reality and viewed the state as either inherently progressive or easily penetrable through parliamentary means. They ignored the many economic, social, and structural constraints which make plausible an extraparlimentary underclass tactic. Leninists made the opposite mistake, assuming liberal institutions to be totally without promise, impenetrable by the working class, and in need of being destroyed from without and immediately transcended.

An earlier Socialist left, as represented by Debs, Boudin, and even at times Bill Haywood, argued the need for a tactical freedom of choice

necessitated by an ambiguous social order. These individuals did not deny their more moderate comrades their elections. Indeed, Boudin was to later describe parliamentary democracy as "one of the acquisitions of the capitalist system which is of permanent value."⁵⁹ On an economic level, they did not seek to replace the AFL in industries where it already existed but to infuse ignored sectors of the work force with a radical industrial unionism. The mobilization of the masses would lend meaning and support to more "respectable" forms of struggle.

However, the left which came into prominence during the First World War, and which was instrumental in the formation of the American Communist Party, rejected the dual strategy of Debs, proclaimed the irreversible decadence of American institutions, and embraced a call for immediate and total opposition to the state—even prior to its reading of Lenin. In the years before the Russian Revolution, the American left was in the process of rejecting representative institutions and focused almost exclusively on extraparliamentary tactics. Moderate socialists, who continued to participate in the "state" through elections and political activity, were implicitly defined as part of that state; their eradication became a logical prerequisite to the destruction of the state as a whole. The left was not following the Russians to a bureaucratic centralism but taking quick steps toward the establishment of a proletarian heaven on earth. And though the romantic dream of Lenin's soviets inspired the left, the nightmare of Stalinism eventually devoured it.

If Louis Fraina embodied the left socialist tradition, his experience was also in many ways indicative of the fate of that tradition. One of the first American Communists to be drafted by the Comintern into the underworld of illegal revolutionary work, Fraina spent several frustrating years attempting to follow the dictates of far-off superiors.⁶⁰ Like the left he symbolized, Fraina was romanced and prostituted by the Comintern, his socialist vision subjugated to the will of mediocre bureaucrats with no appreciation of a working-class reality beyond the Kremlin walls. Within a few years' time, he returned to the Lower East Side poverty of his youth, was cut off from radical activities, and accused by the Communists of crimes, major and minor.

Yet, Fraina managed to effect his own intellectual—if not political—rehabilitation. During the 1930s, writing under the name of Lewis Corey, he produced a scholarly work of political economy analyzing the dynamics and contradictions of late American capitalism.⁶¹ Writ-

ing within a nominally Leninist, creatively Marxist framework, Corey detailed various tendencies within the American economy and argued that the nation was ripe for a revolutionary challenge from below. In the tradition of the romantic left, Corey placed strong emphasis on the subjective imperatives of the revolutionary process. He viewed the task of the proletariat, faced with a resourceful capitalist class, as being immensely more difficult than that of the bourgeoisie, who had only a decadent aristocracy to contend with. The socialist transformation of society, while inevitable, might be seriously delayed, given a complacent proletariat and an aggressive capitalist class.

No crisis of capitalism is hopeless unless the proletariat makes it so. For capitalism can find a "way out"—in more oppression of the masses, in war, in decline, stagnation and decay, for these do not matter to the bourgeoisie if it can cling to power. Socialism is inevitable in the long run: humanity will not forever endure the oppression and decay of capitalist decline, and socialism is the only alternative. But socialism is not inevitable in the short run, and this is decisive in the practical revolutionary politics and struggles of the workers.⁶²

Though maintaining his old distrust of representative institutions, Corey nevertheless tempered his strong Leninist belief in the "actuality of the revolution."⁶³ What was needed, he asserted, was an inflexible Marxism and a flexible policy, one in harmony with the development of working-class consciousness. He came to understand that to acknowledge realities is not to ignore the ideal.⁶⁴

While some left-wing academics and a smattering of iconoclastic radicals paid some heed to Corey's writing, its lack of organizational backing (in an age when affiliation mattered dearly to the left) forced his work into relative obscurity. By the 1940s, Corey had deserted Marxism for a more moderate progressive stance, a sort of pluralist functionalism which included strong support for those "intellectual elites whose contributions are so needed by society."⁶⁵ He died of a stroke in 1953 at the age of fifty-nine, in the midst of government efforts to deport him for his past Communist activities.

But if the traditions of left socialism did not survive in the policies and leadership of the American Communist Party, there is some evidence that they were maintained by the faceless foot soldiers of the party. Some people at least, despite their blind devotion to the party and the Russian Revolution, kept alive (often only within their own

private lives) the critical spirit and potential of an earlier radicalism. Vivian Gornick recalls the people who populated her childhood and youth within a Communist milieu:

Ideas were everything. So powerful was the life inside their minds that sitting there, drinking tea and talking issues, these people ceased to be what they objectively were—immigrant Jews, disenfranchised workers—and, indeed, they became thinkers, writers, poets.

Every one of them read the *Daily Worker*, the *Freiheit*, and the *New York Times* religiously each morning. Every one of them had an opinion on everything he or she read. Every one of them was forever pushing, pulling, yanking, mauling those opinions into shape within the framework of a single question. The question was: Is it good for the workers? That river of words was continually flowing toward an ocean called farshtand, within those elusive depths lay the answer to this question.⁶⁶

But a political theory is a public thing. It has only a limited future in the private space of urban workers. It needs the nourishment of open and sustained debate and the support of the printed word. Though cut off from its most revolutionary elements, the Socialist Party did, at least, maintain the intellectual and structural mechanisms capable of developing advances in socialist theory.

At the same time, the subordination of dynamic elements of American Marxism to Stalinism created a vacuum within the socialist camp. Within that vacuum, the staid Marxism of Hillquit's "old guard" was feeble competition for the utopian speculations of Norman Thomas. As will be seen, Thomas's tactic placed greater emphasis on influencing power than on securing it and served to link socialist theory to the imperatives of reform.

NOTES

1. Louis B. Boudin, *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx in the Light of Recent Criticisms* (Chicago: Kerr, 1915).

2. Ernest Unterman, "An Endless Task," *International Socialist Review [ISR]* 7 (August 1906):104.

3. Boudin, *Karl Marx*, p. 23.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

7. Ibid., pp. 253–54. “An economic law,” Boudin wrote, “means a tendency of economic forces.” He further asserted that “socialism is inevitable [only] in the sense that it is most probable.” “The Machine and Its Psychology,” 25 January 1925, Louis Boudin Papers, Columbia University.

8. Boudin, however, was not a reckless chiliast. At the founding convention of the Communist Labor Party, he opposed a resolution calling for the “conquest of political power,” preferring a statement appealing for the political support of the workers. He is said to have left the convention in disgust, exclaiming, “I did not leave a party of crooks to join a party of lunatics.” Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking, 1963), pp. 179–80.

9. Boudin, *Karl Marx*, p. 27.

10. Ibid., p. 229.

11. Louis Boudin, “Exit the Socialist Party,” n.d., Louis Boudin Papers, Columbia University.

12. Boudin, *Karl Marx*, p. 241.

13. James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America: 1912–1925* (New York: Vintage, 1969), p. 120. For early reactions to the war by domestic and foreign socialists, see William English Walling, ed., *Socialists and the War* (New York: Holt, 1915).

14. Ray Ginger, *Eugene V. Debs: The Making of an American Radical* (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 364.

15. “Resolution on War and Militarism: The Majority Report,” *ISR* 17 (May 1917):670–72.

16. Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism*, p. 127.

17. Louis B. Boudin, “The Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party,” *The Class Struggle* 19 (May–June 1917):41–50.

18. Louis B. Boudin, *Socialism and War* (New York: New Review, 1916).

19. Lenin, V.I., *Lenin: On Politics and Revolution, Selected Writings*, ed. James E. Connor (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1968), p. 111.

20. Boudin, *Socialism and War*, p. 80, pp. 44–80 passim.

21. Even Rosa Luxemburg, who was apt to see revolution as just around the corner, called not for the final insurrection but for “the self criticism of the proletariat . . . its reflection upon its own power.” Rosa Luxemburg, *Selected Political Writings*, ed. Robert Looker (New York: Grove, 1974), p. 210.

22. Boudin, *Socialism and War*, p. 192.

23. Hillquit’s campaign for the New York mayoralty is a perfect case in point. His coalition in the 1917 campaign included a host of antiwar clergy (Norman Thomas, Rabbi Judah Magnes), civil libertarians, and middle-class pacifists. See Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism*, pp. 149–54.

24. Louis Boudin, “Socialist Policy in Peace and War,” *The Class Struggle* 1 (July–August 1917):16–35.

25. Ibid., and Boudin, *Socialism and War*, p. 259.
26. Louis Boudin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat Has Spoken," *New Review* 3 (November 1915):289.
27. See David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 112–13. The major victim of the internal war of the U.S. government was the IWW, whose antiwar stance was strong but hardly central to its activities. The war was but the excuse the authorities were seeking to institute a crackdown.
28. See Draper, *The Roots of American Communism*, pp. 60–64 for a useful presentation of Fraina's views and background.
29. Louis C. Fraina, "Daniel DeLeon," *New Review* 2 (July 1914):390–99.
30. Louis C. Fraina, "The Future of Socialism," *New Review* 3 (January 1915):7–20.
31. Louis C. Fraina, "Socialism and Psychology," *New Review* 3 (1 May 1915):12.
32. Fraina, "The Future of Socialism," p. 9.
33. Louis Fraina, "Revolution by Reaction," *New Review* 3 (October 1915):257–59.
34. Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 291.
35. Philip S. Foner, *The Bolshevik Revolution: Its Impact on American Radicals, Liberals, and Labor* (New York: International, 1967), pp. 95, 96, 124.
36. Ibid., p. 126.
37. Morris Hillquit, *From Marx to Lenin* (New York: Hanford, 1921), p. 10.
38. Ibid., pp. 28–35.
39. Ibid., pp. 48–69.
40. Ibid., pp. 61–69.
41. Ibid., p. 89.
42. Ibid., pp. 138, 132, 139.
43. Ibid., p. 130.
44. N. Lenine [sic] "Political Partics in Russia," *The Class Struggle* 1 (November–December 1917):49–63.
45. Louis C. Fraina, "The I.W.W. Trial," *The Class Struggle* 1 (November–December 1917):5.
46. Harrison George, *The Red Dawn: The Bolsheviki and the I.W.W.* (Chicago: IWW, n.d.), p. 18.
47. Louis C. Fraina, "The Proletarian Revolution in Russia," *The Class Struggle* 2 (January–February 1918):42.

48. Louis C. Fraina, *Revolutionary Socialism: A Study in Socialist Reconstruction* (New York: Communist Press, 1918).
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 209–10.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 195–96.
51. Louis C. Fraina, "Problems of American Socialism," *The Class Struggle* 2 (February 1919):46–47, underlining denoted italics found in original text.
52. Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism*, p. 193.
53. "Manifesto and Program of the 'Left Wing' Section of the Socialist Party, Local Greater New York," *The Class Struggle* 2 (May 1919):214–16.
54. Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism*, p. 128.
55. "The 'Left Wing,'" p. 228.
56. Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, pp. 186–87.
57. Fraina, "Problems of American Socialism," pp. 46–47.
58. Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: NLB, 1978), p. 252.
59. Louis B. Boudin, "Fundamentals of Socialism, Lecture VII, The Human Element: The Working Class," 30 January 1925, Louis Boudin Papers, Columbia University.
60. See Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, pp. 293–302 for an account of Fraina's life after 1919.
61. Lewis Corey, *The Decline of American Capitalism* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1934).
62. *Ibid.*, p. 505.
63. The phrase "actuality of the Revolution" is taken from Georg Lukacs, *Lenin: A Study in the Unity of His Thought* (Boston: MIT Press, 1971), p. 11.
64. Corey, *The Decline of American Capitalism*, pp. 508–10.
65. Lewis Corey, *The Unfinished Task: Economic Reconstruction for Democracy* (New York: Viking, 1942), p. 307.
66. Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 7.

6

Norman Thomas and the Socialism of Concern

The First World War shattered notions of working-class solidarity and the understanding on the left that a clear demarcation existed between the enlightened of the progressive world and those aligned with the capitalist order. Reinforced by organizational separations that were the legacy of the great schisms of 1914–1920, any acceptance within socialist ranks of a maxim reminiscent of Jefferson's "Differences of opinion do not make differences of principle" disappeared completely. In the process of schism and war, the political barricades were thrown every which way. Socialists, newly defined Communists, trade union activists, and liberals and progressives of all stripes constantly maneuvered to redefine the lines of conflict.

In the decades which followed, Norman Thomas emerged as the premier American social democrat, the spokesman for a non-Marxist brand of socialism which offered itself as an alternative to both communism and twentieth-century capitalism. That so moderate a voice for social change should emerge as a major spokesman for the American left (with a fair share of Marxist socialists standing to his right) was indicative of the reigning ideological and political confusion. As Hillquit's old guard scholastically condemned left-wing and Communist heretics to some Marxist purgatory, and as Communists labored to fight off repression while carrying out Kafkaesque Soviet dictates, Thomas fought a lonely battle to create a viable socialist presence in America. In an age of ideology, his lack of a truly critical theoretical perspective

was both his strength and his weakness. While it often allowed him to act when others vacillated and rationalized, it further served to subordinate much of radical thinking to that of mainstream liberalism.

Thomas came to socialism by way of his antiwar efforts during the First World War. Here (as is so often the case with single-issue movements), ideas had been subordinated to action, and a coalition of religious pacifists, socialists, anarchists, and civil libertarians had emerged. Thereafter, Thomas would always be most effective within such coalitions, where the imperatives of an immediate goal gave precedence to struggle over ideology.

The son of a Presbyterian minister and himself a practicing member of the clergy until he left the pulpit in 1917, Thomas had long held doubts about capitalism.¹ He was profoundly influenced by the Social Gospel movement and the writings of its foremost theorist, Walter Rauschenbusch. The Social Gospel approach asserted that the passive acceptance of misery was not a prerequisite to heavenly salvation, and that an ethical order could be created within the human sphere. Furthermore, as all suffered from the chaos, materialism, and cruelty of the modern age, this school of thought encouraged cooperation and a rapprochement between classes. Although Social Gospelers viewed those at the bottom of the social order, with so little stake in existing institutions, as having a particular role to play, it was the idealists of all classes in whom they placed the greatest hope.² While Norman Thomas's later thinking drifted beyond this ethical idealism, the legacy of the Social Gospel movement was always discernible in his writing. Most notably, his disdain for class conflict and his belief that ethical imperatives could, and should, overcome class interests were carry-overs from his less secular past.³

Thomas was repulsed by capitalism's inequalities, its illegitimate distribution of power and wealth, and above all its selfishness, brutality, and inefficiency. Throughout his socialist career, he harped on the chaotic, planless nature of a system that rewarded people not in terms of their ability but merely because they were "fortunate enough to get in on the ground floor." If capitalism produced sharp disparities in income, this was to be damned because of the emphasis it places on luxury and competitive spending. "Society suffers not only from economic waste . . . but from the poison of false standards of value."⁴ Thomas stressed the evils of a system in which socially beneficial forms of labor go underrewarded while corporate needs are catered to; in which

farmers destroy their crops while people starve; and in which the freedom of the worker is the "freedom to take or leave what the boss might offer." His anger focused on the waste, exploitation, and injustice of a machine age in which "there is now no longer any external excuse for poverty."⁵ Like the British Fabians, whom he at times resembled, Thomas had a strong element of Anglo-Saxon rationality in his thinking: it was a fallen Protestant's need to make the world simple, orderly, and right.

However updated and eloquent, there was little new in Thomas's critique of capitalism. He borrowed his understanding of class exploitation from the Marxists, his fetish for rational organization and gradual change from the Fabians, and his compassion for the human predicament from adherents of the Social Gospel. His critique was bound together by a strong sense of outrage at the intensity of human suffering, which he saw as experienced on the most grotesquely graphic scale in wartime. War was Thomas's supreme metaphor—the fate of a social order gone wrong. In war, he found human suffering in its most advanced, brutal, and organized form. While Marxists were fond of seeing the development of capitalism, unchecked by socialism, as leading to a vague barbarism or, at a later date, fascism, Thomas saw the culmination of the process in war. Even the conflict of class versus class was submerged in the conflict between humanity and a cruel, irrational, and wasteful system. The supreme evil would be the triumph of that system's tendency toward the complete negation of human needs, or mass destruction on a global scale. In his writings on war, Thomas grasped the fears of the nuclear age a decade before its appearance, needing no H-bomb to fuel his disgust. "There is nothing that nations will get out of future war except the death of civilization. In that war, they will use the machinery which might have conquered poverty to destroy themselves. There can be no victory which can leave even the victorious anything but a legacy of fear and hate and woe."⁶

For Thomas, as for most socialists, capitalism provided the healthiest environment for war. In the phenomenon of imperialism, he saw nationalism finding a more than atavistic purpose as the need for new markets, new sources of raw materials, and new areas of investment propelled ancient rivalries into the modern age. National egoism offered collectivities the same narrow focus that doomed capitalism presented on a more localized scale. Just as capitalism wrongly perceived the selfish needs of the individual as the primary starting point, so too,

nationalism wrongly focused on the individual nation-state.⁷ At the heart of Thomas's proposed solution, therefore, was a beneficent internationalism. "The grim logic of the machine age will not be denied. Nothing less than the world must be our social unit. Unless we can learn to cooperate in a community of nations and races, the price of our prejudices and our greed for profits will be the ruin of us all."⁸

But even as socialism tended toward peace, and capitalism toward war, the institution of one system or another in a world of nation-states intensified possibilities, not inevitabilities. In Thomas's analysis, only a socialism which encouraged a thorough global collectivism offered any lasting promise to humanity.⁹

However, Thomas's pacifism was not absolute, and he was hardly an isolationist. He viewed force as regrettably necessary for the procurement of certain socially beneficial ends, and he was ever aware that the complete isolation of a nation was neither possible nor desirable in an interdependent world. "The group to which American Socialists belong," he asserted, "believes in isolation from what makes for war, cooperation in what makes for peace."¹⁰

Thomas was willing to "make the most of every helpful tendency and device,"¹¹ and his mature "pacifism" was discriminating and pragmatic. For instance, believing that support for the Spanish left was the best insurance against the rise of a warlike international fascism, Thomas visited the White House to press the Republican cause.¹² Yet, when the European war threatened to precipitate American involvement, Thomas, who had not forgotten the repression that accompanied the earlier world war,¹³ joined forces with some of the most tainted elements of the right to block U.S. intervention.¹⁴

Furthermore, even after he had accepted the reality of the global conflict,¹⁵ Thomas was too much the ex-pacifist to be taken in by the single imperative of winning the war. In what was undoubtedly his finest hour, Thomas served as a one-man "loyal opposition" during Roosevelt's last years. He spoke forcefully, consistently, and openly against Jim Crow policies in the armed forces, the treatment of Japanese-Americans, and the rights of workers to agitate and organize during wartime.¹⁶

Characteristically, the issue which concerned him most was the nature of the peace that would follow the war. Thomas was unalterably opposed to what he perceived as the inflexible Allied demand for unconditional surrender.¹⁷ The demand was, in his opinion, "the worst

possible basis for peace" and revealed the lack of peace planning. Thomas viewed a punitive peace as simply repeating the errors of the interwar years; he insisted that concern for the well-being of the defeated temper the postwar policies of the victors. And, again consistent with his residual pacifism, he argued for a quick peace rather than a perfect one.¹⁸

Thomas often differentiated the socialist from the Communist by saying that the former advocated "salvation without catastrophe and with a minimum of confusion and disorder."¹⁹ In his writings, violence is consistently linked with all that is antithetical to progress. The violence that accompanied labor conflicts was, he thought, either the work of agent provocateurs or acts of frustration on the part of well-meaning, idealistic leaders, unable to rally the mass of workers to their cause.²⁰

Thomas's attitude toward strikes was indicative of a pacifist's compromise with the reality of force and violence. While he hoped for the establishment of the good society through the use of the ballot and other consensual means, he recognized that the industrial strike might remain the only way, short of overt and bloody class war, to ensure the survival of gains won politically.²¹ Unable to imagine the sane revolutionary as renouncing violence while reactionary forces adhered to it, Thomas saw the presence of a strong and united progressive movement as neutralizing the tendency of the privileged to react violently against change. To the extent that peaceful means are effective, the use of violence becomes unnecessary.²²

Although Thomas acknowledged class divisions within society, and the inevitable conflict that exists between classes, he rejected all-out confrontation on grounds that went beyond pacifistic leanings. All classes had a common interest in preserving a degree of peace and the continual operation of industry in order to provide essential services.²³ "To use a familiar metaphor, we must keep the trains running while we change the tracks and rebuild the terminal. More accurately put, socialism must be a process of reshaping and reeducating a living thing."²⁴

An earlier American left, more firmly rooted in the working class and the traditions of American populism, often viewed violence as a cathartic and educational experience for the downtrodden as well as a necessary and legitimate form of social action. The more anarchic and confrontational forms of struggle were at times neither discouraged nor feared. Thomas, however, warned repeatedly against a glorification of

such mass action. He felt that a "propaganda of violence" was more than likely to lead to fascism and observed with trepidation an untaught American radicalism, "illiterate, dominated by a yearning for the days when the little man had his chance, complicated in many cases by race prejudices, and almost uniformly nationalistic."²⁵

In the tradition of John Spargo and other middle-class socialists of an earlier era, Thomas was an antipopulist. He viewed socialism as mediating between organized society and mass resentment, preventing revolution and chaos through orderly, responsible social change. While he championed the interests and encouraged the participation of the downtrodden, Thomas was constantly on guard against the unleashing of unrestrained popular energy. Ironically, we see a reflection of this position in his attitude toward Russian communism.

Over the past sixty-odd years, all segments of the left have felt compelled to come to grips with events in the Soviet Union. Even as many came to the realization that the dream had turned into a nightmare, the socialist preoccupation with the Russian experience intensified rather than diminished. If an earlier generation of socialists asked how so subjectively exhilarating an experiment could have arisen in so objectively backward a land, later leftists pondered the objective hell that proceeded from so well-intentioned a movement. Today, the useful questions in regard to those who observed, supported, and criticized the Soviet Union in its early decades concern not what they knew and when they knew it, but what they wished to know and why. Long lists can be made of those—from anarchists to social democrats to liberals—who saw themselves in the Russian Revolution and seldom went beyond wishful thinking. To elucidate Norman Thomas's approach to the Russian experiment, therefore, is to focus not on the accuracy of his observations but on the ideological content of his delusions.

Following the early euphoric period, Thomas's attitude was one of reserved support for the Bolsheviks. He maintained this attitude, much to the chagrin of the old-guard Marxists in the Socialist Party, well into the early days of the New Deal. Often, his support of the revolution reflected elements of his thought that were conservative and functionalist rather than those that were truly radical.

It was Thomas's understanding that communism arose in the Soviet Union as a result of the chaos and suffering of the Great War, the stupidity of Kerensky's prowar stand, and the ill-advised Allied intervention which stirred Russian nationalists to the defense of the revolu-

tion.²⁶ What saved the revolution, given the absence of a mass proletarian uprising outside of Russia, were (1) the backwardness of the land, which "enabled it to endure a degree of economic chaos that would reduce the highly industrialized nations . . . to a frenzy;" (2) the lack of a viable opposition; (3) the brilliance of the Bolshevik leadership; and (4) the counterrevolution, which brought progressive elements to the revolution's defense.²⁷ As befitting Thomas's lack of populist fervor, he perceived the revolution not as a glorious beginning to an even more glorious history but as a desperate—if courageous—uprising by the brutalized masses which was quickly—and perhaps luckily—co-opted by a revolutionary elite.

Furthermore, Thomas had few illusions with regard to the degree of freedom in postrevolutionary Russia. The absence of free press, religious liberty, and party opposition were all noted, as were "Communist terrorism" against dissidents and the "long list of political prisoners and exiles guilty of no overt act against the state."²⁸ Yet, Bolshevik repression evoked only casual concern on Thomas's part. "This state of affairs," Thomas wrote with regard to the totalitarian excesses, "seems to have aroused no great objection among the people who never had any tradition of liberty and who have great compensations in the welfare work of the government."²⁹

Most illuminating are those aspects of Soviet life which impressed the American socialist. First, Thomas noted the selflessness of the new leadership which, however despotic, did not reward its elite with "superior economic advantages but only with power."³⁰ He offered an equally naive appraisal of Russian economic administration, which he viewed as diminishing the "dangers of a bureaucratic and overcentralized state."³¹ Furthermore, like other progressives of the Twenties and Thirties, he was awed by what was understood to be a developing economic miracle in industrialization and production. "Two things of profound importance have already been shown in Russia: 1) that it is possible to get tremendously effective work done in the industrial field for the sake of social or class gain rather than for personal profit, and 2) that a planned economic order is not beyond the wit of man to achieve."³²

The image of the Soviet Union that Norman Thomas cautiously embraced was that of a Platonic order of compassionate and altruistic leaders struggling to raise a long-suffering people from poverty, ignorance, and despair. The outside industrialized world could learn from Russia the

principles of social concern and economic planning. Whereas remnants of Second International socialism criticized the Bolsheviks for betraying key elements of a relatively libertarian vision, Thomas felt comfortable in simply praising Russia for its economic advances.

Equally illuminating are other Soviet failings which did not cause Thomas undue concern, chief among them wage differentials and the organization of Soviet work life. In *As I See It*, a collection of essays written in the spring and summer of 1931, he remarked:

Stalin's further recession toward capitalist devices of unequal pay and unequal rewards for work of ranging value proves that mankind cannot be pitchforked into absolute economic equality or coerced into good work, but must at the most hopeful best be reeducated. There is, however, nothing fatal to socialism in the degree of inequality of reward Stalin has recognized. Ownership is still social; men in Russia cannot live by their claims on what everyone needs to use. Private profit is not lord of economic life.³³

In *America's Way Out* (1931), he talked of the retention of money and the wage system in the Soviet Union "by way of description and not of criticism."³⁴ Thomas commented with even more approval on the introduction of scientific management: "Emphatically, Russia has not gone in for a naive form of workers' control. Earlier attempts at such simple industrial democracy in the factories soon gave way to a highly disciplined organization in which the expert . . . once more proved his key position in an industrial system."³⁵

In 1937, Thomas visited Russia, and his writings from that period on reflect his growing disillusionment with the Soviet Union. As we have seen, what support Thomas gave to the Russian experiment was based on the Bolsheviks' perceived ability to eliminate misery and to introduce an element of order and compassion into the lives of the Russian people. Thomas's rejection of the Soviet Union was predicated on the same grounds. He was incensed that "most" of the Russian population had "been reduced to bread and water," repulsed by the barbarity of the collectivization process, and shocked by the rigors of the rationalization of industry. In light of the suffering on the lowest human levels, he found the increases in wage differentials without justification and the absence of democratic institutions leading to a bureaucratic despotism which would thoroughly discredit the humanistic pretensions of the system.³⁶ "If Russia is democratic," he asserted, "the word democracy has lost all meaning."³⁷

Thomas's socialism had always been a compromise between a collectivist imperative and a liberal republican sensibility touched by noblesse oblige. As long as Russia appeared to be meeting the material needs of large segments of its population, Thomas's paternalistic conscience could mute his liberal sentiments. But once, in his opinion, the Soviet regime ceased to function on this level of compassion and, indeed, intensified the suffering of its masses, Thomas altered his views. Thereafter, his liberal proclivities governed his appraisal of the Soviet Union. He would see in the Russian state a "totalitarianism practically indistinguishable in its burdens upon citizens from Hitler's" and more despotic than the despotism of the czars.³⁸

Thomas's criticisms of the Soviet Union served only to reinforce his long-standing objections to Marxism (which he had always viewed, at best, as a useful myth for motivating and controlling the underclasses). "It gave them hope," he observed, "while it restrained them from premature and blind revolt."³⁹

The Marxist tradition presupposes an egalitarian human potential that the functionalist Thomas could never accept. The manager, the engineer, the technician, and the skilled and unskilled worker were to him permanent fixtures in the complex society, each needing the other. He believed that even under capitalism, in the most exploitative of relationships, the class struggle must be mitigated. "Between unions and employers," he wrote, "there must be some dealings, some *modus vivendi*, if life is to go on."⁴⁰ Hence, an appeal to workers as workers made only minimal sense. While quite willing to improve and humanize the work process, Thomas accepted the inevitability of a stratified work force and of labor as alienating activity. He viewed the reconciliation of workers with their work as unlikely, as "so much necessary work is dull, repetitive and monotonous."⁴¹ Like the British Fabians, he turned to man the consumer. "We work to live; we do not or should not live to work. Man is not merely a producing machine. . . . Our emphasis on man's role as a producer is dangerously to put the cart before the horse."⁴² Thomas found the class appeal of Marxism wholly lacking, its narrow economic focus unable to unite mankind in an interdependent world. The "highest appeal" of socialism, he asserted, could be "nothing less than human solidarity."⁴³

Furthermore, Thomas saw no renewal of the Marxist tradition on the horizon. He perceived the future of Marxism as torn between the staid determinism of the old guard and the revolutionary adventures of

various Leninist groups. The former, in his opinion, had ceased to perform its dynamic function, and the Red alternative was "so bound up with war, dictatorship, the definite mobilization of the crowd mind about a dogmatic creed that it cannot claim . . . to offer peace or freedom."⁴⁴

In the years following the Second World War, Thomas was prone to bind his critique of Marxism with his antipathy for the Soviet Union: Marxism was to blame for the disaster of Russian development, and the Soviet Union had co-opted what was positive in Marxism and used it for its own foul ends. While acknowledging that Stalinists deviated from the intent and spirit of Marx, Thomas perceived Russian communism as the chief beneficiary of the Marxian legacy. He saw less of a betrayal of Marxism than its fulfillment in the Stalinist order: "the uncompromising doctrine of class conflict and the amoral theory of the materialist dialectic" readily lent themselves, in his mind, to the Russian brand of socialism.⁴⁵ Like his Stalinist counterparts, Thomas was caught in a web of dichotomies. Idealism confronted materialism; gradualism and republicanism confronted revolution and dictatorship. The possibility of a reform capitalism progressing toward socialist solutions was weighed against the alternatives offered by the Russians in Eastern Europe.

So damning were Thomas's criticisms of Marxism and of the Soviet Union, and so long, and distasteful, was his running battle with native American Communists, that his stand during the shameful years of the McCarthy era was disappointingly ambiguous. Thomas was impressed by Sidney Hook's "Heresy, Yes, Conspiracy, No" guidelines for civil liberty.⁴⁶ His work *The Test of Freedom* offers a "socialist" justification of Hook's position. Describing American Communists as "once a fairly powerful fifth column for Stalin" who were still of great value to the Kremlin,⁴⁷ Thomas supported the expulsion of Reds from teaching and key government jobs.⁴⁸ To Thomas, for people to become Communists was "an act of surrender of their own conscience and of their freedom to serve the truth" which disqualified them from holding sensitive positions in society.⁴⁹

A desire to humanize rather than reverse the collectivism implicit in a technologically based society lay at the heart of Thomas's thinking—as it did for many twentieth-century progressives. If Thomas praised the Soviet Union longer, and with greater fervor, than many others on the non-Communist left, it was in part because he saw in Russia a test

of economic planning on a national scale. By the 1930s, such planning (once sponsored by only a few nonsocialist liberals such as Herbert Croly) had a host of champions. Often fueled by myths of goings-on in Fascist Italy or Soviet Russia, an intellectual fetish for rational organization and planning flourished.⁵⁰ Norman Thomas stood on the left wing of that phenomenon. He rejected the chaos of the market and extended reserved praise to the Bolsheviks much as G. B. Shaw and others of the British left praised the Italians.⁵¹

What separated Thomas from admirers of the Fascists and from Stalinist sycophants was a line of reasoning (currently being popularized by Michael Harrington) which focused on the quality and direction of planning. The question is not, he explained, "how shall we plan, but for whom and for what shall we plan."⁵² Planning in the context of a privately owned and controlled economy would serve only the wealthy few, while planning in a democratic and socialist-oriented society would reap benefits for all. "Socialism is the essential condition of planning," he maintained, "even as planning is the essential condition of a successful socialism."⁵³

It is in this context that we can begin to understand Thomas's position on the New Deal. To many, Roosevelt's program seemed a clear and substantial shift to the left. Especially within the ranks of the old guard socialists, whose socialism was inextricably linked to their faith in the positive nature of the modern state, any move away from a *laissez-faire* approach to economic problems was viewed as a definitive step toward the good society. Others, most notably those within the sphere of influence of the Communist Party, branded the New Deal as fascistic.⁵⁴ Thomas's position was somewhat more prudent than either of these two approaches.

Though Thomas approved of the New Deal's means, he was skeptical of its motives. His criticisms were consistently balanced with slight praise. Thus, he viewed Roosevelt's reforms as "by no means negligible" though he saw them as "largely superficial." The New Deal was to Thomas an "experiment in reformed capitalism" with all the positive connotations of reform and the negative ones of capitalism.⁵⁵ On the positive side, he was impressed by the program's suggestion of "hope, confidence [and] action" and the psychological boost it gave to a nation mired in the depths of the Depression.⁵⁶ On the negative side, he viewed the New Deal as a doomed effort to stabilize a dying system. In 1936, Thomas singled out the lack of a truly progressive

vision, the sabotage of the Supreme Court, and the failure of business interests to support Roosevelt as factors that would ensure failure.⁵⁷

Thomas labeled the New Deal a form of "state capitalism," which he defined as "a degree of government ownership and a much greater degree of government regulation of economic enterprises for the sake of bolstering up the profit system."⁵⁸ However, while he maintained that America was fast constructing an economy similar to fascism, with policies which could "justly be called fascist in tendency," he would not describe the system as a whole as Fascist. It lacked the charismatic leader, jingoistic nationalism, and irrational totalitarianism which he understood to be the truly defining features of fascism.⁵⁹

Throughout the Roosevelt years and thereafter, Thomas was caught in a dilemma which would gradually force him into a more positive evaluation of the New Deal. Many of Roosevelt's specific programs were consistent with the "immediate demands" that had long been a part of socialist platforms and manifestos. Furthermore, the mechanisms of bureaucratic organization, created and employed by the Democrats, approached Thomas's understanding of what a responsible state apparatus would resemble. Given his overall perspective, he could only be encouraged by an activist state attempting to rationalize the economic order while neither trampling on democratic republican principles nor unleashing the fury of the mob. At the same time, he was shrewd enough to perceive that the New Deal was doing more for "temporary capitalist recovery" than for reform.⁶⁰

It is worth noting the historical consensus on the New Deal that slowly manifested itself, not only to his right but to his left as well. Many of the Socialist Party's old allies within labor and progressive circles had developed a mutually beneficial working arrangement with the myth, rhetoric, and patronage of the New Deal. During the Second World War, the Communists under the leadership of Earl Browder embraced Roosevelt and Americanism with a passion. As Thomas would later point out, "After his death, in labor circles Roosevelt's name became a convenient and powerful symbol."⁶¹ In the decades following the Second World War, for Thomas to reject the legacy of FDR in its entirety would have meant denying the efficacy of economic planning and progressive social change. Like much of the modern left in its attacks on neoconservatism, Thomas became an awkward defender of sets of policies he had earlier criticized severely. As America retrenched into the stagnation of the Eisenhower years, Thomas was reluctantly crediting Roosevelt with creating the basis of a "pragmatic socialism."⁶²

It is a sad indictment of Depression-era public policy that so moderate a voice as Norman Thomas found himself unable to embrace wholeheartedly the efforts of the Roosevelt administration. After all, his vision of a new world bore a considerable resemblance to the world he critiqued, as his prescriptions varied often only in spirit from those of reform capitalism. In Thomas's vision, the new would be separated from the old by the elimination of extremes: the commanding heights of power and wealth, the depths of misery, and the waste of human capabilities. Disparities in income, function, and participation in decision-making would remain. Thomas dreamed of a compassionate and rational society in which the search for individual, even egoistic, happiness would be tempered by a concern for human suffering and a recognition of the need for cooperation. While his politics and rhetoric reflected a socialist sensibility, his vision, reasoning, and long-range prescriptions were often dreams culled from earlier ages and ideas.

Like most socialists of his day, Thomas viewed public ownership as a necessary prerequisite for socialism, and he paid a good deal of attention to the manner and quality of operation in the publicly owned corporation as defining how "socialist" the unit was. However, while Thomas was emphatic in seeing "industrial democracy" as essential to socialism, the nature of that democracy is well worth looking at more closely. At the outset, it is clear that he placed greater importance on the efficiency and quality of an economic unit's output than he did on the egalitarian nature of the work processes. To this end, he argued for the "intelligent application of the merit system."⁶³ Furthermore, while he believed workers had an interest in industrial standards and job conditions, he felt that their participation should be encouraged only to a point. "The expert must be protected," he wrote, "and all positions kept out of politics in the narrow sense."⁶⁴ The more highly skilled worker might be motivated by the creative aspects of his work, while the less skilled would gain encouragement from a "genuine share in the government of the whole industry." By this he meant that "ordinary folks be given legal and peaceable machinery of control in their own interests over the experts and specialists who must necessarily direct administration."⁶⁵ In later writings, he amplified this point to mean "voting for directors in the corporation where they work" and explained in a footnote "that modern democratic socialists do not suggest direct choice of foremen or managers by the workers under them."⁶⁶

Thomas held a view of industry and work in which labor exists as a forever secondary activity to the non-work-related interests of the

individual. Ultimately, the worker in Thomas's utopia is only satisfied as a consumer, by "increasing and enriching leisure." Abundance and fraternity would allow workers to transcend the narrowly materialistic premises of their lives but would not eliminate alienated labor.⁶⁷

Thomas internalized the liberal notion that genius exists as individual talent, and although he recognized the collective nature of modern production, he continued to maintain that contributions could be measured in individual terms. As already noted, he was a steadfast champion of the essentiality of management.⁶⁸ Stockholders and landlords were social parasites, to be sure, but other types of capitalists were viewed more ambiguously. Only within the divorce of ownership from administration does the system of private property fully lose its ethical justification to Thomas. "In other days ownership meant responsibility. Your robber baron, glorified thief that he was, at least had to hang on to his own barony by his own shrewdness and his own sword. Your earlier capitalist was really a captain of industry. Ownership implied not merely a vague concern for management but some participation in it."⁶⁹

Like the moderate socialist of an earlier era, Thomas was not bothered by great wealth or inequality but by the power and privilege such wealth conferred. In a uniquely Lockean fashion, he took particular objection to the institutions of inherited wealth and station. Speaking of modes of compensation in a socialist society, he wrote, "It can afford if necessary to give material rewards in moderation so long as it gives with them no power to found an economic dynasty. The socialist objection, let us say, to Henry Ford's position is less his wealth (though this is grossly excessive) than the power it gives him and his heirs after him."⁷⁰

Thomas foresaw the rise of a welfare-oriented society as increasing the goods and services not directly paid for by the consumer. Such a development would have an equalizing effect on the distribution of the social product. At the same time, money and the price system would be indefinitely needed to give "effective choice" to individuals. We can see the extent to which his analysis was governed by individualistic premises only by mentioning some of those goods he specifically perceived as remaining within the money system: food, culture, clothing, and housing.⁷¹

In the fashion of his tradition, Thomas offered not a synthesis between the individual and the community but the possibility of uneasy

compromises. First, there is the retention of market mechanisms and the focus on the individual as consumer. Within society, the individual remains unfulfilled, alienated, and dependent on the wishes of others. Through an increase in leisure time and a more equitable distribution of wealth, a sanctuary of freedom is created in the private sphere. The worker submits to discipline, management, menial work, and a host of benignly coerced activities, all in the public interest. Yet in one's private time, without the age-old problem of economic security to worry about, one achieves an unthought-of degree of freedom. A freedom, that is, to consume goods, as one sees fit.⁷²

Thomas further offered freedom of conscience as a substitute for freedom of action. People may be restrained for what they do but not for what they think. "What is important is that socialism should avoid penalizing a man for his political opinion," he wrote.⁷³ A private, inner sphere is created where freedom can exist untouched by the state, society, or other people. Collectivism might demand control of a person's behavior, but the perpetuation of freedom demanded that the mind be left alone. Yet, freedom was but one good—along with security, peace, fraternity, and abundance—that a just society required. Freedom had limits, particularly external ones. Thomas believed that a socialist state had an obligation to enforce a certain ethical bias in society and could therefore not be indifferent to the content of classroom lessons.⁷⁴

Nor did Thomas see the future of democracy as unaffected by the machine age. Rather than positing the possibility of using technology to narrow the intellectual gap between people and to increase mass participation in decision-making, he perceived the opposite effect. "What the complexities of the machine age, as contrasted with a simpler pioneer epoch, have done to democracy," he observed, "is less to standardize it, than to compel it to rely more largely on experts."⁷⁵

Ignoring the complexities of a man-made process by which "intelligence" is distributed unequally (along with wealth and creative work) among classes, genders, and people, Thomas postulated an elite form of democracy in which the masses choose "between ideas and programs already more or less formulated by minorities."⁷⁶ He criticized the notion that the "cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy" and claimed that "the development of democracy will require the election of fewer, not more, officials on a general ballot and a concentration of responsibility for carrying out general politics."⁷⁷ His

conception of democracy was the "popular choice of qualified men,"⁷⁸ and to this end he advocated the establishment of screening panels for certain executive positions and the increased use of administrative commissions as an adjunct to popular decision-making bodies.

The future of healthy parliamentarianism depends upon the growth of a custom already under vigorous way in America; that is the reference to administrative commissions of detailed rules and regulations within the framework of a general law. Such commissions, aided by trained bodies of public servants, are the most hopeful signs of progress in our municipal, state and federal governments.⁷⁹

To Thomas, ideas and beliefs were the bonds of human solidarity and the eventual source of earthly salvation. As workers faced the Great Depression, he saw the absence of a new philosophy as reinforcing the absence of bread and jobs. He bemoaned what he perceived as an anomic malaise that had overtaken a humankind desperately in need of tutelage and leadership.⁸⁰ However, that which was so soothing to the Marxist of the Second International—a mechanistic dependence on history and economic forces—was never a consolation to Thomas. He viewed social problems as essentially "ethical" in nature; they implied decisions of will and choice and offered the possibilities of failure as well as success. And in an age that had seen the aimless slaughter of the First World War, the degeneration of Soviet policies into Stalinism, and the rise of fascism, it was, at times, the pessimism of his idealism that came to the fore. Particularly in the writings of his later years, Thomas would point to man's fixed nature and the limitations of social reconstruction in a fallible world. At the same time, however, he saw limits to apathy and despair and argued, in effect, that a great difference existed between a sober realism and a cynical pessimism. In *Socialism Re-Examined* (1963), he wrote: "Indeed we have been inclined to go too far in our disillusionment. We expected too much too easily and in our disappointment we fell back on apathy, an amoral scramble for money and status, a rather cheap cynicism, or a worship of strength as strength, no matter how employed. We invited the coming of the theatre of the absurd."⁸¹

Thomas hoped for a third party of progressives which might end the monopoly over American politics held by the Democrats and Republicans. However, that third party was not to be guided by a coherent,

alternative vision. It would be a mass-based party, uniting workers, farmers, middle-class idealists, and others seeking a better world. There would be only a small, subjectively socialist presence in the party; this would perform the role of "leader and teacher" to the whole.⁸² In his mind, ideological bickering had been the ruin of a potentially successful movement, and humanity could ill afford the divisive luxury of maintaining and perpetuating even a correct philosophy. "Our hope of being anything more than a Marxian sect," he cautioned his comrades, "lies in an emphasis on unity of action for immediate measures reaching toward a socialist goal."⁸³ Not believing in the development of socialist consciousness through struggle, and fearful that a sustained pedagogic effort would inhibit the ability of a movement to organize for reform, Thomas opted for a muddling-through approach. This approach might create the structures of a socialistic world but—even in his own analysis—it would do little for socialist understanding.⁸⁴

Under the leadership of Norman Thomas, the non-Communist left developed into a vanguard of reform liberalism. It championed a host of seemingly unrelated progressive causes, independent of a single party or organizational framework, often leaving unstated the essence of its philosophy. Thomas never abandoned the socialist label, but that was of little importance. From the early Thirties until his death, to be a socialist meant only to ally oneself with those causes which Norman Thomas fought for.

NOTES

1. W. A. Swanberg, *Norman Thomas: The Last Idealist* (New York: Scribner's, 1976), p. 59. In terms of completeness, Swanberg's biography of Thomas is the most recent and the best. Bernard K. Johnpoll's *Pacifist's Progress* (New York: Quadrangle, 1970) gives an excellent running account of the politics of Thomas's career, including the various infighting within the ranks of the Socialist Party and the left. While Johnpoll is most accurate in detailing the shifts in Thomas's stated positions, I believe that there is much more consistency than is apparent in the theoretical underpinnings of Thomas's thought throughout his life.

2. See Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), for a more definitive statement of the Social Gospel approach; and John R. Aiken and James McDonnell, "Walter Rauschenbusch and Labor Reform: A Social Gospeler's Approach," *Labor History* 11 (Spring 1970):131-50.

3. What follows emphasizes Thomas's writing during the 1930s as the best expression of his socialism. However, this has not prevented the liberal use of works written after the Second World War where they reflect the more enduring aspects of Thomas's thought.

4. Norman Thomas, *America's Way Out: A Program for Democracy* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 35–36.

5. Norman Thomas, *Human Exploitation in the United States* (New York: Stokes, 1934), p. 139; Thomas, *America's Way Out*, p. 4.

6. Norman Thomas, *War: No Profit, No Glory, No Need* (New York: Stokes, 1935).

7. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, pp. 37–42.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

10. Norman Thomas, *After the New Deal, What?* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 124.

11. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, p. 114.

12. Swanberg, *Norman Thomas*, pp. 218, 210–21.

13. Thomas asserted that President Wilson waged war in the name of democracy and in so doing established "a scarcely disguised dictatorship." Thomas, *America's Way Out*, p. 116.

14. See Swanberg, *Norman Thomas*, pp. 243–57, and Johnpoll, *Pacifist's Progress*, pp. 205–31 for Thomas's antiwar activities prior to American entry into World War II.

15. Thomas came out in support of the war two days after Pearl Harbor, declaring that although he considered the confrontation avoidable, "but now it is rather literally 'we or they' which Americans face. I am for us!" Quoted in Swanberg, *Norman Thomas*, p. 260.

16. See *ibid.*, pp. 258–92, and Johnpoll, *Pacifist's Progress*, pp. 232–50 for Thomas's activity during this period.

17. Michael Harrington told me that Thomas's stand against unconditional surrender was the source of Thomas's greatest pride during his later years.

18. Norman Thomas, *What Is Our Destiny?* (New York: Doubleday, 1944), p. 133; see also Norman Thomas, "Some Wrong Roads to Peace," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 September 1943. As he would write some years later, "I wanted a declaration of terms for peace in language that the German people could understand." Norman Thomas, *A Socialist's Faith* (New York: Norton, 1951), p. 316.

19. Norman Thomas, *As I See It* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), p. 18.

20. Thomas, *Human Exploitation*, pp. 288–91. Thomas asserted that violence was too often advocated by persons as a way of "compensating for the futility of their actions by the violence of their opinions." *As I See It*, p. 47.

21. Thomas, *New Deal*, p. 189.

22. Thomas, *War*, p. 219.
23. See Norman Thomas, "Is Peaceful Revolution Possible?" *World Tomorrow*, 14 September 1932, pp. 251–53.
24. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, p. 151. Thomas did attack the functionalist argument that calls for sacrifice by all in times of severe crisis. "In the storm of this great depression," he wrote, "we may all be in the same boat, but there is still a vast difference between travelling in the first cabin and in the stokehole." *Human Exploitation*, p. 142.
25. Thomas, *As I See It*, pp. 32–33.
26. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, pp. 71–72.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Thomas, *As I See It*, pp. 13–14.
34. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, p. 78.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
36. Norman Thomas, *Socialism on the Defensive* (New York: Harper, 1938), pp. 31–45.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
38. Thomas, *A Socialist's Faith*, pp. 134–35.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
40. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, p. 139.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
45. Thomas, *A Socialist's Faith*, p. 43. Thomas attributed many of the failures of German social democracy to Marx. In his opinion, the Marxist theory of the state was "more or less incompatible with the democratic techniques which it [German SDP] tried to follow." P. 133.
46. Swanberg, *Norman Thomas*, p. 368. See pp. 329–75 passim for Thomas's activities during the McCarthy era. Also see Sidney Hook, *Political Power and Personal Freedom: Critical Studies in Democracy, Communism, and Civil Rights* (New York: Criterion, 1959), esp. 227–320, for an exposition of the "Heresy, Yes, Conspiracy, No" position.
47. Norman Thomas, *The Test of Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1954), p. 79.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 90. By the early Sixties, East-West détente and the aversion

of nuclear war were important concerns of Thomas. In this period, he mellowed somewhat in his hatred of communism and Marxism, holding up the possibility of a convergence in theory and practice between East and West. In this period as well, his socialism took an even more reformist and social democratic cast. One might speculate that as his zeal for socialism receded, his antipathy to the Soviet Union and other betrayors of his creed did as well. See Norman Thomas, *Socialism Re-Examined* (New York: Norton, 1963), pp. 64–112.

50. Books calling for a focus on planning and collectivism during the New Deal years include: Rexford G. Tugwell, *The Industrial Discipline and the Governmental Arts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933); John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (New York: Putnam, 1935); Harold Ickes, *The New Democracy* (New York: Norton, 1935); Thurman Arnold, *The Folklore of Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938); Adolph A. Berle and Gardner Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (New York: Macmillan, 1933); and, of course, James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (New York: Putnam, 1942), which bridged the progressive and conservative implications of this whole preoccupation.

51. Thomas, *As I See It*, p. 86.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

54. The Jewish labor movement in New York, which was the financial backbone of the Socialist Party during the lean years after the split with the Communists, was particularly taken up by the New Deal. Abraham Cahan of the *Jewish Daily Forward* went so far as to propose that FDR be offered a party card. Daniel Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 165n.

55. Thomas, *New Deal*, pp. 13, 16.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–13.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

61. Thomas, *A Socialist's Faith*, p. 99.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 101. Consistent with the anticommunism that so marked his later years, Thomas's later criticisms of FDR focused on what he perceived as the Democrat's indiscriminate appeasement of the Soviet dictatorship. Furthermore, in his analysis of the British welfare state, Thomas was more impressed by what the British Labourites did not do (establish a totalitarian socialism) than by what they did. Indeed, he admitted that British Labour went little beyond the reforms of the Roosevelt-Truman administrations. Pp. 74–75.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, p. 39.
65. Norman Thomas, *What Is Industrial Democracy?* (New York: League for Industrial Democracy, 1925), p. 50.
66. Thomas, *A Socialist's Faith*, pp. 149, 149n.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
68. In *A Socialist's Faith*, Thomas attempted to respond to Walt Whitman's "lofty equalitarianism" poems by pointing out that "all of us of necessity begin by accepting great inequalities in natural endowments." P. 141.
69. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, p. 7.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-211.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-23.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 128.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
81. Thomas, *Socialism Re-Examined*, p. 22.
82. Thomas, *America's Way Out*, pp. 278-91.
83. Thomas, *As I See It*, p. 21.
84. In Thomas, we see shades of a position (later developed by Harrington) which tends to see objective socialist success in American political and economic structures even while admitting the subjective failure of socialists to capture the hearts and minds of the American people. "The richest nation in the world, and the most industrialized," he wrote in *A Socialist's Faith*, "proclaims its faith in 'free enterprise,' which it rejects in practice." P. 87.

Michael Harrington and the Future of Socialism in America

Michael Harrington came to the American socialist movement in the late 1940s, at a time when many socialists, having given up on any meaningful political conquest by the left, realistically redefined their goals in terms of progressive pressure on the more enduring centers of powers. In the wake of official and vigilante repression, the radical left had all but withdrawn as a public entity on the political scene. Moderates, reduced to the gadfly tactics of Norman Thomas, assumed a stance which had been their *de facto* position for well over two decades—since the disappointing electoral showings of the Thirties and the final defections of the remnants of socialist unionism after 1936.

Harrington dates his entry into the socialist camp from his affiliation with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. If today he is fond of describing himself as being on the left wing of what is possible, there is in this position a good deal of continuity from those early years. Dorothy Day represented a socialism of compassion, a tactical retreat from the politics of power. If in 1949 to be a Marxist, a revolutionary, and a political was increasingly inexpedient, to be a passionately concerned Catholic made the greatest sense to Michael Harrington, whose developing socialism was a reflection of his middle-class, Midwest, Catholic decency. Unlike Debs, whose baptism in socialism came through confrontation and struggle, Harrington found the left through an encounter with the imperatives of altruism. He relates in his autobiography an experience in his native St. Louis:

One rainy day I went into an old decaying building. The cooking smells and the stench from the broken, stopped up toilets and the murmurous cranking sound of the people were a revelation. It was my moment on the road to Damascus. Suddenly the abstract and statistical and aesthetic outrages I had reacted to at Yale and Chicago became real and personal and insistent. A few hours later, riding the Grand Avenue streetcar, I realized that somehow I must spend the rest of my life trying to obliterate that kind of house and to work with the people who lived there.¹

Eventually, Harrington found the more traditionally Marxist left as a member of the Young Socialist League and as a follower of the iconoclastic Trotskyist Max Shachtman. Trotskyist organizations have the unique virtue of being able to balance a complex, often ideologically rigid position with the necessities of working in coalition with others with whom they disagree. In part, this characteristic derives from their faith in the potential of the working class for self-education through struggle. Within the context of a renegade Trotskyism, Harrington was able to maintain the involvement in individual causes which had marked the Catholic Worker approach while systematizing the ideological dimensions of his socialism. By the late 1950s, he had found his way into a consistently more moderate home within the remnants of Norman Thomas's Socialist Party. Within a few years, many clearly perceived him as the heir apparent to Thomas, doubtlessly by way of his tireless involvement in civil, rights, peace, and civil libertarian causes.

Harrington's first book, *The Other America*, reflects the type of socialism personified by Norman Thomas. It is perhaps the supreme intellectual success of that tradition. Most immediately, Harrington sought not to lay the groundwork for a new society but to correct the most glaring injustices of the old. It was an attack not on inequality but on suffering, not on poverty but on the perpetuation of misery, the fact that perhaps upwards of one-quarter of Americans existed "at levels beneath those necessary for human decency."² Rather than a text for those who must cast off their chains, it was an appeal to the more affluent, who are asked to ransom the poor from their suffering. In the tradition of Thomas, it is not a work of politics but of compassion in the finest sense of the term.

Nevertheless, the political significance of *The Other America* cannot be overestimated. At a time when problems were perceived to be non-ideological in nature, Harrington focused on the contradictions of human relations, on the shame of poverty in "a nation with a technology

that could provide every citizen with a decent life."³ The book shocked important segments of American society out of the complacency of the 1950s. It anticipated the 1960s and developments affecting blacks, the poor, and the alienated; it helped to create a constituency of conscience within government, the universities, and the middle class. Yet, as will be seen, there is a more ambiguous component in its effect.

The Other America is a consciously nonsocialist work. Coming out of a decade of MacCarthyite slander, Harrington saw little purpose in critiquing poverty within the context of a socialist analysis. As he explained a decade later:

The question was simple enough: Should my book on poverty argue for socialism? I decided that if I ever mentioned the word socialism, I would divert attention from the plight of the poor, evoke all misconceptions Americans had about the term, and would have to deal with the myths the word had conjured up. Proposing a specifically socialist solution would make it more difficult for the millions of trade unionists, liberals, and men and women of good will to see the reality of poverty. I felt (and feel) that the "other America" can be abolished prior to a revolutionary reconstruction of American society. I thought (and think) that sophisticated executives might realize they are losing more in the economic underworld than they are gaining from tolerating it.⁴

Harrington's "other America" is populated by the economic rejects of capitalism: day laborers; institutional and domestic workers; the urban dispossessed; blacks excluded from the dynamic sectors of the economy; urban hillbillies thrust into the twentieth century; the aged, the mentally distressed, and the alcoholic. He also included the intellectual poor, who come to poverty by way of their spiritual disillusionment with the materialism of middle-class life.⁵

Harrington sees it as the collective misfortune of these groups that they are living in misery at a time when major social segments seem to be on the threshold of affluence. Consequently, this majority is indisposed to deal with the remnants of poverty that exist, so often invisibly, in its midst. Harrington observes that while labor and the liberal left forced the construction of the welfare state to meet the demands of the "middle third" of the population, the inhabitants of the "other America" were excluded from the advances of the New Deal years.⁶ Unlike those who served their self-interest through involvement in earlier progressive movements, the latterday oppressed are incapable of any form of self-liberation. Their lives are marginal, and desperately

miserable. "It is almost impossible to organize the workers of the economic underworld in their self-defense. They are at the mercy of unscrupulous employers. . . . They are cheated by crooked unions, they are used by racketeers."⁷

The Other America attempts to create a political constituency based not on the self-interest of the miserable but upon the concern of the more privileged. The upper two-thirds are asked to institute a massive effort to break up the culture of poverty and to restore hope by assuring the poor that solutions are both possible and forthcoming. It would, of necessity, be an effort by the federal government and the less lowly; the poor would remain passive participants in the shaping of their future.⁸

The legacy of Thomas's socialism is more than evident in *The Other America*. Throughout, there is the reminiscent emphasis on intense human suffering as the core of the problem. The poor are viewed as existing in an objective state of misery. This state is only slightly defined by the technological and productive levels of society. It exists more or less independently of the "affluence" of the majority. Like Thomas, Harrington suggests that solutions need not immediately involve any severe dislocations of privilege. On the contrary, they would benefit society as a whole, including the affluent.

Furthermore, *The Other America* perpetuates much of Thomas's altruistic approach to social activism. Progress is seen as occurring with little input from the oppressed and apart from any development in their consciousness. It is not power but the fruits of power which are at issue; those in command of the social order are asked to offer a better life to the less fortunate.⁹

By explicitly focusing on misery rather than a more relativistic concept of poverty, Harrington did not challenge the American public's obscured understanding of class structure. For if the miserable and wretched constitute the "other America," their more affluent counterparts are composed not only of those classes traditionally viewed as privileged but of the white working class as well. By implication, the organized urban proletariat is thrust out of its underclass position and placed in the company of the wealthy. The question that motivated concerned citizens and well-meaning government bureaucrats during the Sixties was increasingly "Who suffers?" rather than "Who benefits?" as the best of social policy shifted toward the bottom third of society. The thrust of the decade's politics belonged to a top-bottom coalition

of concerned—and often wealthy—liberals and the urban poor.¹⁰ The less marginal working class was assimilated psychologically into the bottomless well of the middle class; caricatured neo-Fascist, hard-hat construction workers, bigoted ethnics, and racist schoolteachers were forthwith banished from the progressive fraternity.

Many on the left assumed that the immediate needs of the poor could be met without endangering the progress of the more affluent working class. Not in this, or any later work, did Harrington accept the social and economic suppositions of those who believed the working class had “made it” in American society. He believed that aid to the lowest third of society would make a future “socialist” coalition with the middle third all the more likely and possible. In *The Other America*, he explicitly posits organized labor as having, out of self-interest, a strong stake in improving the lot for the economically desperate.¹¹ In his second book, *The Accidental Century*, Harrington suggests that the new economic and technological pressures might ensure the vitality of underclass movements, even as the bottom levels of misery are abolished. Insecurity and relative inequality would be the evils fought by the new political struggles.¹²

However, *The Other America* was seldom read in conjunction with any avowedly socialist work. It was read as a prescription for the last, and not the first, step in the construction of the good society. While intending to aid the poor, it also served to aid in ignoring the unwealthy. In the final analysis, *The Other America* stands as a historically ambiguous work. The first conscious intellectual step out of the Fifties to receive wide popular exposure, it is a less-than-subtle attack on the myth of capitalist perfection. Yet, the realistic empiricism which is its strength makes for a grave weakness. By focusing on an analysis of what is, at the expense of an explicit vision of what could be, Harrington allowed his work to be reintegrated into the very ideology he rejected. For if the Great Society declared war on misery and poverty, it was because these evils were perceived as anomalous within American life. The social crusades launched from Washington in the 1960s were at once exercises in concern and cover-up, well-meaning efforts that masked the contradictions of modern capitalism by eliminating those that were most glaring. In the process, the plight of a working class living above misery was obscured, and the possibility of a unified underclass response to the system became more difficult.¹³

A more recent work by Harrington, *The Twilight of Capitalism*,

analyzes the effects and disappointments of the social programs of the 1960s. Here he focuses on the stated, long-range intent of policy planners and their progressive allies rather than on the actual policies that were forthcoming and the way the American public viewed them.

Harrington perceives the failure of the poverty program as the result of the internal workings of a welfare state existing within the framework of a capitalist economy tied to a capitalist logic. He asserts that government policy did too little rather than too much, as accomplishments were often outstripped by the euphoria of liberal rhetoric and official press releases. One result was that social allocations took place within a framework of scarcity, so that the "urban struggle became more and more of a battle between have-nots among the minorities and the poor and have-littles from the white working class."¹⁴ Compounding the struggle was an inequitable tax structure which placed the burden for innovative social policy on the less wealthy. Harrington's analysis, however, somewhat underplays the extent to which policy planners and progressives accepted this trade-off between the poor and the "have-littles." He paints a picture more of structural subversion than failure, claiming that "the flaws which are said to be inherent in such programs turn out on closer examination to be the result of the limitations—usually the cheapness—of the welfare state itself."¹⁵

Harrington's analysis obscures the full irony to be found in the fate of the poverty program. To be sure, as he points out, the moderate left, including many within the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, was sincerely concerned with redressing the inequities of racism and eliminating poverty. That policy was subverted by the political conservatism of the later Johnson years (a conservatism undoubtedly linked to the logic of capitalism) and the immediate need to trade "butter" for "guns." However, it must be noted that the focus on eliminating human misery perpetuated in the media, official statements, and even progressive circles allowed a limited and inadequate set of programs to appear as a feasible, even desirable, compromise. This despite the fact that it was often at the expense of the unpoor working class.

As an activist and a theorist, Harrington has always been uncomfortable with such a compromise, and many of his prescriptions have been the negation of such a strategy.¹⁶ Yet, *The Other America* was too much the *raison d'être* of such a tactic, a work that implicitly—and despite the intentions of its author—placed a wedge between the poor and the unwealthy and helped define the position of political bar-

ricades into the 1970s. In effect, it stands as a warning on the dangers of muckraking devoid of an explicit political vision, as its unintended consequences came back to haunt a movement. By virtue of its empiricism, the work inadvertently impeded the ability of progressive forces to move, in a united fashion, beyond a politics based loosely on concern, decency, and compassion and toward a political strategy based on mutual self-interest and structural change. It is ironic that Harrington's own socialism, as expressed in the sum of his writings, argues a theory of the state and for the type of political coalition that *The Other America* alone naively undermines.

In *Socialism*, Harrington discusses the concept of antisocialist reforms (government policies which, while overlapping progressive demands, are implemented as a means of staving off rather than ensuring a socialist reconstruction of society).¹⁷ Throughout his writings, he uncovers elements of this type of "socialism in the welfare state, emerging Third World political formations, and the Communist states of Eastern Europe and Asia. While perceiving the paradigm case in the policies of Bismarck, who simultaneously introduced elements of a modern welfare state while systematically attempting to outlaw and destroy the German socialist movement, Harrington understands twentieth-century variants of this phenomenon as decidedly more ambiguous in both effect and potential.

Dating back to Adam Smith, liberal economic theory has always viewed the public interest as identical with the sum total of all private interests. As a result, it has prescribed the free interplay of private needs and desires as the best formula for the survival of a healthy social order. However, as early perhaps as John Stuart Mill, the liberal tradition began to see the limitations of the market in ensuring private happiness, freedom, and stability. The Keynesian economists of this century gave analytic substance to this realization and asserted the need for the conscious manipulation by government of private interests to act in their own interest. They recognized that it was proper to intervene in the economy in order to preserve and maintain its capitalist nature. In *Toward a Democratic Left*, Harrington traces this development, pointing out the manner in which a Keynesian theory exists as a corrective to the thinking of Adam Smith rather than as an attempt to transcend it.¹⁸

Harrington's initial assessment of the welfare state is therefore negative. "Left to itself," he writes in *Socialism*, "the system creates a welfare state that provides some benefits for all yet favors the rich and

discriminates against the desperate." Furthermore, he argues, "Even when it functions to produce the highest standard of living the world has known, the social consequences of that achievement are so appalling as to vitiate much of it." Yet, he proceeds to assert that "we Socialists support every struggle for the partial and liberal reform of this inadequate structure."¹⁹ The dialectical complexities of this position point toward the core of his theory of the state.

In *Toward a Democratic Left* (1968), *Socialism* (1970), and *The Twilight of Capitalism* (1976), Harrington unravels the complexities of a state capitalist system in which a prima facie case for viewing private corporate interests as synonymous with the public good dominates collective decision-making. Underclass interests, when even considered, must be mediated through those policies compatible with corporate priorities.²⁰ He explicitly rejects the thesis that we exist in a postindustrial society where capitalist priorities are subordinated to the public good and argues that "the normal tendencies of the welfare state . . . are to follow the old capitalist priorities in a new sophisticated way."²¹ As profits—and the control over their investment—are left in private hands, the structural realities of macroeconomic planning prevent government policy from deviating too sharply, and for too long a time, from corporate interests. Unable to intervene directly for the public good, government planners can only attempt to assist corporate interests in a manner compatible with their public-spirited policy objectives. Harrington believes that it would be an error to view the anti-social outcomes of policy as the result of antisocial intent.

[It is not] a conspiracy in which evil plutoerats utilized state power as an instrumentality of private purposes. It is a much more complex process in which men make choices that are implicit in the very structure of the economy. For so long as companies are conceded the power to make the basic investment decisions of society, just so long will government be their servant and the common good private property.²²

Clearly, Harrington takes issue with those European Social Democrats who view socialism and the welfare state as nearly synonymous, or who believe that the latter makes possible an easy transition to the former. He also demonstrates a greater sophistication than did many of his socialist predecessors who optimistically projected a positive role for the state. Nevertheless, in *The Twilight of Capitalism*, Harrington moves from a thorough critique of capitalist reform to "criticize some

of those leftists who have concentrated too exclusively on the undeniable proposition that social reform within capitalism eventually tends to help capitalism."²³ His argument focuses on the complex nature of the modern industrial state:

The Welfare State . . . is a dialectical and complicated phenomenon. It is predominantly and unconsciously (ideologically) structured so as to help the corporations more than the people. But this is accomplished in a complex way in which the government takes on a life of its own and is not simply an "instrument" of capital. As a result, it is a battle in which the popular forces, if they are massively and effectively mobilized, can make incremental gains of considerable value. But then the long range tendency reasserts itself, and the victories of the organized workers and the poor, the minorities and the middle class advocates of social change, are taken over and turned to ruling class purposes. However, the possibility of assembling the political forces that might make irreversible structural changes and eventually transform the system itself occurs precisely in the course of the "reformist" battle for modest increments of dignity.²⁴

For Harrington then, the welfare state is not a reflexive tool of capitalism. There is no giant conspiracy of elites whose existence pluralist cynics can spend their time disproving. There is, rather, a more subtle structural and ideological bias which orients government policy in favor of capital.²⁵

Capitalism is an order of society modeled on the interaction of competing egos. It requires elites to be very discrete in the exercise of their political power so as not to dispel the ideological myths of the system.²⁶ Furthermore, it is the nature of the game that capitalists compete not only against their underclass but also against other capitalists. Harrington claims that the state exists as the "executive committee" of this societal enterprise, looking out for the capitalist system as a whole rather than for individual anarchic capitalistic entities. While the state clearly exists *for* capital, it is not always composed *of*, or managed *by*, the avowed agents of capital and has a considerable amount of autonomy in its actions.

Given the necessity of capitalist elites to manage key aspects of their affairs indirectly through the state, an opening arises for progressive forces to penetrate the state and carry out the class struggle within government. The state can exist as an arena of conflict in the short run, even as it exists as a tool of capitalism in the longer course of

events. Of course, in that longer course, the bias of government policy will reassert itself; reforms will be "turned to ruling class purposes." Yet, in the short run, the struggle within the state can be a means for the formation of the type of political coalition capable of making "irreversible structural changes" in the system as well as effecting meliorative reforms.²⁷

We can now place Harrington's theory of the state within its proper perspective and in relationship to the theories of earlier American socialists. With Hillquit as our starting point, we see that the mainstream Marxist of the Second International viewed the state as a medium easily adaptable to underclass needs, as a positive instrument for the transformation of society (often despite the intentions of its functionaries). This view of the state coincided with the worst fears of conservatives (nineteenth-century liberals) and the greatest hopes of modern reform liberals. All tended to see the state as having a potential structural bias in favor of redistributive social change. To some extent, such a perspective has had an enduring influence on segments of the American labor movement who were quick to endorse the New Deal and have viewed the policies and practices of Franklin Roosevelt as a model for progressive action ever since.²⁸

Conversely, a thoroughly antagonistic attitude toward the state developed on the radical socialist left and found support in Leninism. Daniel De Leon claimed that the state could be captured by the underclasses but never adapted to their ends. Later radicals, such as Fraina, asserted that the state was utterly impenetrable and must be smashed and destroyed forcibly from without. Reform was possible only through militant pressure on capitalist elites. As a result, for over half a century, American Communists have fluctuated between periodic "underground" strategies and a syndicalist approach which called for non-ideological participation in progressive mass movements aimed at pressuring, but not infiltrating, the state.²⁹

A more traditional adaptation of this latter theory of the state has of course always existed in mainstream trade union circles. In this view, the eventual structural transformation of society is considered impossible given the impenetrability and unconquerability of the state. Adherents of this view indulge in politics only cynically and intermittently and prefer to focus their energies on bread-and-butter unionism.

Eugene Debs took a more ambiguous approach. He accepted the left's understanding of the bias of government policy but was nevertheless

not adverse toward political activity in conjunction with other forms of struggle. Debs realized that to the extent that a successful political program is possible, it is often outside pressure that forces capitalist elites to allow the development of a democratic reality. In his less-than-systematic way, he recognized many of the complexities Harrington observes.

Norman Thomas held a pluralist conception of the state. For him, the state existed as a neutral body which is both penetrable by diverse groups and necessary for the mediation of group conflict. The activist state is neither progressive nor reactionary. If the state acts as the executive committee of the ruling class, it is only because the political forces of capitalism have been more successful at playing the democratic game. The bias he perceived in the New Deal was not inherent in the state but in the ideology of its planners. Two strategies followed from this conception. First, the state need not be transformed or reformed but merely imbued with a subjectively progressive spirit through the election of the right people to office. Second, barring the first strategy, the state could be pressured to serve the interests of the needy on an ad-hoc basis by progressive coalitions capturing the sympathy of its various functionaries. This explains the gadfly nature of Thomas's socialism, his aloofness toward the New Deal (which he criticized for lack of the proper intent), and his enthusiasm for similar welfare state policies administered in England by socialists.

Harrington rejects the positive state of the Second International Marxist and the impenetrable state of the radical neo-Leninist-left. He sees in government policy a structural as well as ideological bias which inevitably subverts reform in favor of ruling-class interests. The state, in his analysis, can serve the interest of capital without being tied directly to the expressed wishes of capitalists. Domination proceeds under a pluralist facade, with the state protecting privilege while it claims (and may even intend) to serve the public as a whole. The state may, however, assume a short-term progressive role in two respects. First, for whatever purposes, it does promote significant reforms. Second, in its executive function, it focuses on issues in which the left has a serious interest. Harrington does not believe that the state merely reacts to underclass pressures; he sees constructive underclass activity as often resulting from government policy.³⁰ He therefore makes a strong case for asserting that the left has more than a casual interest in who administers the state.

Like any serious socialist, Harrington is concerned with creating the type of political coalition capable of effecting a qualitative restructuring of society. Such a coalition, he concludes, exists and is submerged within the language and style of American politics.³¹ Furthermore, as he argues in *Socialism*, many of those forces who participated in the formation of the modern welfare state were sincere representatives of the poor and lowly, the nuclei of a social democratic movement. Be it by cooption, compromise, or shrewd infiltration, Harrington perceives an underclass presence in the state.

Harrington sees an "invisible mass movement"³² as having arisen in an America that was utopian from its very beginnings, where working people were given the free gift of the ballot, and where the "ubiquity of panaceas within the reform movement" discredited early socialist attempts to make contact with working-class organizations.³³ Socialists failed by virtue of their rigidity and lack of an immediate and practical program. "The great and abiding sin of American socialism has been sectarianism: the tendency to counterpose the socialist vision of a complete transformation to the partial demands and ideological imprecisions of men and women engaged in a struggle for their daily bread."³⁴

While Harrington expresses some sentimental disappointment over the failures of avowed socialists, he finds no portentous historical implications in this failure, given the similar course that both the European and American underclass struggles have taken. He views European Social Democrats as, in Schumpeter's words, those who "took office but not power"; history and circumstances gave them the ability to reform but not change society.³⁵ What they did was to create a humane capitalism (*socialist capitalism* is Harrington's term) whose justification is the very real improvement it brings to the daily lives of working people. "Those who lived through that period," he quotes a writer on French Popular Front reforms of the Thirties, "will never forget the emotion of old workers going on vacation and discovering the sea and the mountains which they had never known."³⁶

But for all its meaningful reforms, Harrington believes a true transition to socialism has eluded the overseas left. Europe's masses would have little to do with the "bloody romance" of the radicals, and the practical programs of the reformers fell prey to the tendency of a capitalist system which "vitiates or subverts" socialist efforts.³⁷ Consequently, European social democracy "made socialism indistinguishable

ble from intelligent American liberalism, a program for the humanization, but not the transformation of capitalism.”³⁸

Having liberalized European social democracy, Harrington proceeds to socialize American reform capitalism. First, he demonstrates a programmatic equivalency between state actions on both sides of the Atlantic. Second, he downplays the importance of an explicitly socialist vision—that which gives the European left its greatest claim to be called “socialist” and the absence of which denies that label to American progressives. Third, he attempts to demonstrate that the American welfare state was the creation of the same class of people who participated in other great Social Democratic movements.

Following the First World War, Harrington observes, the American labor movement took tentative first steps toward political involvement. During the New Deal years, it became a potent force for societal reform, working with and within the Roosevelt administrations. He found this turn away from Gompers’s economism to be momentous; it signaled the rise of a class-based movement which argued for “the political economy of the working class” and whose impact on politics has been “roughly analogous to that of the Social Democratic parties of Europe.”³⁹ This tendency crystallized in the 1960s as the forces of organized labor came to constitute a “labor party of sorts within the Democratic Party.”⁴⁰

Harrington’s logic is quite apparent. European Social Democrats were in actuality programmatic liberals who unwittingly failed the cause of socialism. However, they did humanize capitalism and thus deserve support. Given a viable means of moving toward socialism, they would embrace it. In America, a mass movement came into being which similarly did not institute socialism. But it too humanized capitalism, and it too—despite its procapitalist rhetoric—deserves qualified support. Given the European experience, even if the aims of the American movement were avowedly socialist, it is doubtful it could have realized them. In all but name, the American movement is identical to its European counterpart.

The President of the AFL-CIO has the same general outlook as the European social democracy. He speaks in American accents and his nation’s history does not require him, or even allow him, to present himself as an anti-capitalist. The political content of his remarks, however, is quite analogous to that of mainstream European socialists.⁴¹

Harrington obscures some truths even as he uncovers others. First, his analysis of American history, while revealing forces in the national experience which promoted class integration, draws an overly consensual conclusion. American ideology did indeed create a myth which made socialism seem superfluous. However, myths are seldom universally accepted, and those who saw beyond were not always benignly ignored or eventually integrated back into the whole. As was argued in an earlier chapter, Gompers and his "pure and simple" brethren did not shy from utopian and radical panaceas because of their ubiquity alone; they feared the reponse of a malevolent American capitalism to radical demands from below.

Second, Harrington asserts that the American labor movement became implicitly social democratic when it began to organize politically. However, to be "political" in an American context does not require any belief in a philosophy of the public good that goes beyond the narrowest conceptions of self-interest. Indeed, such a philosophy might make a person or group suspect within the arena of American politics. Labor's growing political involvement was in part a sign of further accommodation, the succumbing of the labor movement to the paternalism of the state as it relinquished certain pretensions to eventual self-liberation. When labor embraced political action, it severed whatever ideological links it might have had to a militant and native American radicalism which was highly suspect of state-instituted reform.⁴² If there have been changes in labor's position vis-à-vis politics, those changes—like the welfare state they helped to shape—were far more ambiguous than Harrington implies.

Harrington's analysis points out many of the ironies of advanced capitalist society. In an attempt to transcend capitalism in Europe, and to humanize the content of underclass lives in America, movements of the unprivileged participated quite actively in the construction of a "socialist version of capitalism."⁴³ The welfare state is at once partially their creation and their nemesis; it is the source of both their oppression and what little human space is allotted to them. It is often impolitic for the radical to attack the welfare state, given the close ties that the underclasses have developed to its policies and functionaries. Though one could argue that the state objectively serves the interests of capital, one still must contend with the subjective illusion that the state is a positive force for change.

Harrington's theory of politics and the state is imbued with an ap-

preciation of a massive false consciousness which affects both the right and the moderate left. The rank-and-file left view that the welfare state is objectively progressive is reinforced by American conservatives' inability to see their own real interests in this modern phenomenon. All agree that the state is a left-wing device. An attack on the welfare state, therefore, runs the risk of being dubbed an implicit endorsement of the right and a betrayal of left-wing politics.⁴⁴ It is for this reason that "socialists must be in the forefront of every fight to defend and extend the welfare state even as they criticize its inability to solve fundamental problems and propose alternatives to it."⁴⁵ It is a tactic, a practical means of forging a coalition which might extricate a class from the instrument of its oppression. A look at Harrington's understanding of the Marxist tradition might offer further insight into the politics of his socialism.⁴⁶

At the 1979 conference of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), of which Michael Harrington was the national chair, a fellow founder of the organization was quoted as follows: "I like DSOC, . . . but I wish Mike Harrington would talk more socialism like Norman Thomas did."⁴⁷ Whereas Thomas steadfastly espoused socialism clothed in a non-Marxist liberal philosophy, Harrington consistently champions a nonsocialist tactic reinforced by a Marxist analysis.

Harrington is an accomplished and often perceptive Marxist whose work is informed by modern critical understandings of Marx. He sees in Marxism neither a cookbook formula for revolution nor a guide to the inevitable course of history. Rather, he views the writings of Marx, and those within his tradition, as continuing "an applied methodology that permits us to analyze and hopefully to shape the future whose alternatives are being prepared within the history we live and make."⁴⁸ Marxism exists as a paradigm essential for structuring the "facts" of the world so as to ask the most useful, socially beneficial questions. It is a theory "critical about its own definitions and data," a starting point for social analysis and not the final statement of truth.⁴⁹ Harrington is fair and eclectic in his thinking. He is as apt to quote neo-Leninists and radical socialists as he is to rely on the standard social democratic writings.

The Marx in whose steps Harrington follows saw people as the creatures of their world, even as they are shaped by the society they live in and "influenced by the given circumstances at least as much as by

the individual actors."⁵⁰ Harrington places a wedge between Marx, the dialectician and social analyst, and Engels, the "polemicist" of the creed. "Marx tolerated a kind of intellectual double standard," he writes, "allowing his factionalist partner the rhetorical luxury of imprecisions and sweeping generalities, which he would never tolerate in his own scientific work."⁵¹

Engels' misrepresentation of Marxism in its first generation facilitated the rise of a "vulgar Marxism." Highly positivistic and deterministic, it served to hide the real Marx from the public for nearly a century. Harrington sees two factors as aiding in this misrepresentation. First, there was the myth, traceable to the romantic notions of the "young Marx," that working people are capable of grasping the subtleties of socialist theory. Borrowing from the thinking of Gramsci, Harrington states that Marxism can only serve ordinary people "as a prejudice, a superstition, an aroma of necessity which gives meaning to the struggle for daily bread."⁵² Harrington believes the European proletariat adapted this "vulgar Marxism" to its own needs prior to the First World War, fashioning an "ideology" to serve a movement. To the extent that it gave hope and assurances to the most downtrodden of social classes, Harrington sees this false understanding of Marx as having played a positive role. Second, Harrington sees the institutionalization of Marxism, in both Stalinism and social democracy, as contributing to its further misrepresentation. "Vulgar Marxism is, in short, a perfect ideology for dynamic bureaucracies that are going to save the workers from themselves."⁵³

Harrington, like other modern theorists, rejects the "young Marx—old Marx" dichotomy, seeing much more continuity in the writings of the great philosopher.⁵⁴ However, while he rejects the materialist old Marx of *Capital*, he also disavows the spiritual Marx of the 1844 Manuscripts and other early writings.⁵⁵ While rejecting the assertion that Marx abandoned the philosophical presuppositions of the early writings, Harrington sees him maturing beyond key neotheological aspects of his early thought. To Harrington, the young Marx (including the collaborator on *The Communist Manifesto*) was an apocalyptic, eschatological chiliast, whose romantic search for a Hegelian unity in all of nature overrode his humanistic concerns for the working class and fueled his militant, revolutionary zeal.⁵⁶ In short, Marx's political concern for a mystical restructuring of society clouded his judgment in a manner that compassion for the immediate needs of the oppressed would

not have done. The later Marx balanced his vision with concern for underclass suffering and, Harrington concludes, was a responsible, pragmatic, and skeptical social democrat. Moderate yet revolutionary, Harrington's Marx realized that the reformist labor movement of his day contained the "cells of the revolution to come."⁵⁷

As Harrington views it, Marx's turn toward moderation was a natural adaptation of theory to historical events. (Socialist theory is "inherently revisionist."⁵⁸) In addition, some of the shift toward moderation is explained by Harrington as part of Marx's attempt to implement the Hegelian imperative of reconciling theory and action. Hegel, strongly influenced by Adam Smith's concept of the "invisible hand," posited a history in which people carry out a perfect plan of which they have no knowledge or understanding. Only at the end of the process is there a synthesis of thought and action, and people gain consciousness of their actions.⁵⁹ The Marx of 1843 united theory and practice in the proletariat and asserted, "If philosophy finds its material weapon in the proletariat, the proletariat finds its spiritual weapon in philosophy."⁶⁰ Not only did the young Marx see the working class as the instrument of its own liberation; he also saw the class as consciously proceeding toward a consciously understood goal.

A later Marx, Harrington argues, viewed the proletariat as moving toward self-liberation, but hardly with the degree of consciousness that he earlier supposed. There is thus much of the Kautskyite in Harrington's Marx, whose working class can develop little beyond a consciousness based on the need to organize and fight for immediate needs. Unlike Kautsky (and Lenin), Harrington does not view Marx as positing a hegemonic role for socialist activists and intellectuals. Still preoccupied with the imperatives of self-liberation, Harrington's Marx is wary of the bureaucratic tendencies of such an elite. Given the unlikelihood of a consciously revolutionary proletariat, and his own antipathy to a vanguard emancipation, Marx was left with no alternative other than a gradualist, reformist approach.

Harrington's "invisible mass movement" was therefore anticipated by Marx who, having made contact with the true and unromanticized reality of the working class, moderated his prescriptions accordingly. This Marx perceived the working class in a state of only semiconsciousness, having an understanding of itself as a movement but not of its full potential or future. The socialist can only advise the movement in a respectful way and thus prod it toward a more radical position.

The young Marx, in Harrington's mind, created a premature synthesis of thought and action. This youthful optimism was corrected by a mature Marx who understood the myopic (thought not blind) condition of the proletariat.

Harrington's socialist therefore must be a gentle guide to the under-classes. He must tutor but seldom lead; approach them as they are and not as they should be. "We have to work out political ideas," he writes, "starting where people are, and lead them in the direction of this analysis and this political program."⁶¹ Like Hillquit and other early Marxists, he is not dismayed by the lack of socialist awareness in the masses. What consciousness they have of themselves as part of a movement can suffice. The Second International socialist believed that the logic of history and economic conditions would serve to educate the proletariat. While not sharing this faith in determinants, Harrington sees the working class as a surprisingly active part of a socialist movement, however tied to an antisocialist ideology, less-than-visionary leadership, the Democratic Party, and the welfare state.

On the trade union question, Harrington supports cooperation with labor elites. On his activities with the League for Industrial Democracy during the mid-Sixties, he writes, "We had determined to be truly radical: to involve ourselves with the leaders elected by the American workers themselves, rather than with those imaginary figures who should have been leading a revolutionary proletariat that did not exist."⁶² While Harrington's working-class movement wages the good fight without socialist encouragement, the rank-and-file of that movement is inextricably bound to its structures and leaders. True radicals must recognize such truths and make the best of them; they must work to force action at the point of mediation.

A basic truth of Harrington's socialism is "that the good society only becomes possible when there is a technology of abundance and a mass movement capable of mastering it."⁶³ The historical move to socialism must combine the proper proportions of the subjective and the objective, of consciousness and material prerequisites. There is nothing novel or controversial in this assertion. With the exception of the most romantic utopians—who would transcend poverty and exploitation through human will alone—and the most vulgar of Marxists—who wrap their analysis in economic determinants—all socialists have spoken of a mix of prerequisites. However, socialists differ in the importance they place on the various factors. In Harrington, the mix is interesting.

As we have seen, the subjective element of Harrington's equation is qualified. He calls for a mass movement which understands the reality of growing collectivization and which sees the need to shape the coming collectivism in a democratic rather than bureaucratic or oligarchic fashion. What little socialist consciousness people require matures within the context of struggles for predominantly liberal goals. Within Harrington's dialectic, liberalism finds not its antithesis but its fulfillment in socialism as the struggle for individual self-interest is more and more framed within collectivist terms.⁶⁴ As he writes in *Socialism*, "If millions of Americans do become socialists, they will do so because in the course of struggling to make the welfare state respond to their immediate needs they will have discovered that they must go far beyond it."⁶⁵

To the extent that a socialist consciousness is of vital concern to Harrington, he finds tragic implications in the appearance of a premature radical vision. In *The Twilight of Capitalism*, he dwells on the dilemma of the revolutionary in a prerevolutionary age, quoting Engels's statement: "What he can do does not depend upon his will, but upon the level of the conflict between classes and the development of material conditions of existence."⁶⁶ The lessons of Harrington's Marxism are the lessons of restraint and moderation.

Furthermore, Harrington is a firm opponent of "vulture politics," the notion that a subjective radicalism grows with setbacks. He prefers to argue that possibilities for socialism increase as conditions improve.⁶⁷ Rather than viewing defeats as constructive learning and organizing experiences for the proletariat, he tends to see revolutionary defeats as too often maligning the good name of socialism, making future advances more, not less, difficult. For example, while he perceives Lenin as a rather heroic figure, "inspired by a passion to create a socialist order even under impossible conditions,"⁶⁸ he believes his failures set the stage for a new, bureaucratic form of class domination. Following the lead of Max Shachtman,⁶⁹ Harrington defines the Stalinist order as a form of "Bureaucratic Collectivism," neither capitalist nor socialist, in which "the state owns the means of production and the elite Party bureaucracy owns the state."⁷⁰ He views this new form as "proto-typical" of very real tendencies in countries that search for an anticapitalist means of modernization. Hence, he looks with tragic disapproval on socialist efforts in the Third World, where the material basis for socialism does not exist and the impoverished urban masses

and peasantry are poor substitutes for an organized, technologically based proletariat. Such efforts are patently dysfunctional as they create myths concerning the impossibility of a revolutionary transformation of society.⁷¹

Harrington therefore views the "premature" political victories of socialists in Russia and the Third World as disasters which create negative expectations as to what a socialist order can and will do. He attempts to place a distance between these "socialist" regimes and socialism, between the actions of socialists in power and the potential of socialism for the future.

However, if there is much in Harrington's critique of Russia and Third World socialism that is useful and insightful, the denial of the socialist nature of those failures frustrates the possibility of constructively living with history, of viewing past theories and practices as something more than excess baggage. The Russian experiment is a disaster for socialism in that the architects of the new order were socialists who denied the compromises they were making with the socialist vision. They defined the possibilities of socialism in terms of their own reality instead of viewing their reality in terms of a larger socialist vision. They were dealing in an analysis by definition and it was the empirical basis of their definition which was the true betrayal of socialism. As Alisdair MacIntyre perceptively delineates a difference between Lenin and Stalin: "Lenin of course was always prepared for tactical retreats from socialist principles and was prepared to be almost indefinitely flexible and adaptive; but where Lenin recognized such defeats for what they were, Stalin presented them as advances toward socialism and in the course of doing so redefined socialism away into tyranny."⁷² However, whereas Stalin submerged vision in practicality and created tyranny, Harrington, in sharply separating the two, creates an almost Augustinian dualism as the socialist vision is restrained from making full contact with the politics of the day.

It is easy to understand the reticence of Harrington's socialism. His vision of socialist possibilities is moderated by a blend of postutopian soberness and a rejection of a "turning point" understanding of social change. For him, there is never a "day" of the revolution in which "history makes its leap from past to future."⁷³ Furthermore, his socialism makes no spiritual promises to its adherents; seldom does it reach beyond the pursuit of self-interest to embrace a psychological unity which might transcend the alienation of the modern age. The fear

of a runaway subjectivity, of a socialism motivated by romantic passion, seems to haunt Harrington's analysis as he posits a gradual course for both social reform and that degree of socialist consciousness necessary for qualitative change. The realm of freedom must be slowly instituted so that dreams never overtake possibilities. Seemingly, the limitations of achieving mass consciousness are as much a blessing as a hindrance.

In *Toward a Democratic Left*, Harrington speaks of Keynesian prescriptions as correctives, within a liberal and capitalist framework, to Adam Smith's economics. He asserts the need to maintain the method while rejecting the goal, using Keynesian procedures to serve social and not private ends.⁷⁴ Yet, beyond the advocacy of a progressive social policy based on deficit spending and active government intervention in the economy, there is an even greater element of Keynes in Harrington's socialism.

Like the most perceptive of socialists, Keynes the antisocialist implicitly understood the essence of capitalist power to be the indirect manner in which it is exercised. The secret to the perpetuation of capitalism was that the process itself was complex, subtle, and forever roundabout. A simplification of the process would make the dissolution or destruction of the system more likely. (He shared this insight, of course, with no less a socialist than Karl Marx. Marx's purpose in writing *Capital* was to lay bare the secret *rules* of the capitalist game so as to destroy the myth that they exist as unalterable *laws* of nature.) When Keynes, faced with what seemed the near imminent collapse of the capitalist world, formulated prescriptions for an ailing economic order, he devised a complex cure, buttressed by the most intricate mathematical computations. It focused on government spending to increase aggregate demand and consumption rather than on confronting sagging production. As an economic historian observed:

In instances Keynes' ingenious arrangements of cause and result raise the question whether the game is worth the candle. Would it not be simpler and surer, if "natural" forces were to be overridden anyhow, to achieve the object without fuss? However that may be, Keynes in his more elaborate methods preferred to pay at least lip service to orthodoxy, pending return, hopefully, to traditional ways.⁷⁵

Harrington's prescriptions are "Keynesian"—not only in the sense that he argues for increased government intervention in the economy

but in the nature of his proposals, which call for increased government control of capital investment and planning for full employment. While undoubtedly of immediate benefit to the underclasses, these measures do little to alter popular conceptions of how (or for whom) the system operates. Capital remains mystified, and capital accumulation, the organization of the work force, and the division of labor go unattacked and relatively unaffected. Socialist structures, however meaningful in effect, are introduced through the back door, all but circumventing popular consciousness. Just as Keynes wished to preserve capitalism within the guise of social reform, Harrington wishes to transcend capitalism within a similar guise.

Such an approach, evident in European social democracy, allows the exploiter to take on the appearance of the exploited. The private incomes and talents of the corporate rich and a managerial and professional class are appropriated for redistributive purposes. However, no real challenge is leveled at the functional position of the privileged within the division of labor. When investment prerogatives are democratized, it is often members of this same managerial class who administer to popular wishes. While the underclasses may find such reforms desirable, these measures contain little in the way of an attack on the concept of "right"; the policy appears worthwhile *despite* the apparent injustice to the rich and privileged. Under this strategy, each move toward socialism may undermine the self-respect of the underclasses—who still operate under a bourgeois notion of rights—even as formal powers are being transferred to the majority. The lack of an explicit—and ever present—socialist vision retards the development of a mass movement not only capable of liberating itself but also understanding its "right" to do so.

Very much like Morris Hillquit, Harrington has a keen grasp of the Marxist tradition, and he is quite careful to integrate the more cogent insights of the present-day radical critique into his analysis.⁷⁶ He has an ability to touch all the correct theoretical bases in a consistently reformist fashion. If popular participation is encouraged, it is never at the expense of trade union leaders or liberal politicians. If socialist consciousness is viewed as essential, that consciousness is perceived as little more than prejudice ("but a new sense of purpose").⁷⁷ If the restructuring of the division of labor is seen as more than a utopian illusion, it is a strategic priority of importance some way down the road. Harrington's ideal movement is discreetly socialist, responsibly

militant, moderately revolutionary. It proceeds consciously toward the next decade, fairly unconscious of what might lie beyond. Whereas Keynes would manipulate the outer mechanisms of the system in order to preserve it, Harrington argues for a similar tactic in order to make the system untenable without further, even more socialistic reforms.

Within the socialist movement, two polar strategies have historically confronted one another, and the desire for consistency has given each a sort of gravitational pull. One, which we might label the *reformist* tactic, has argued for electoral work within the institutions of American democracy. It has focused on working with and through union and political elites with an eye toward the infiltration of the state and the establishment of meliorative reform. In the tradition of its European mentor, Eduard Bernstein, the movement has been everything.

The alternative tradition, the *revolutionary* tactic, has accented a strict adherence to the socialist vision coupled with an extraparliamentary approach which sought the total conquest of state power. Mass mobilization and support for insurgent rank-and-file movements within the unions have been the order of the day. Furthermore, the movement has embraced almost mystical, eschatological purposes.

In America, pure variants of the latter strategy were to be found in the writings of De Leon, Louis Fraina, and some of the Wobblies. The former tactic has been favored by the likes of Victor Berger, Morris Hillquit, and Norman Thomas.

However, at the same time, a third approach has offered itself. We have seen elements of it in the writings of Boudin, Debs, and the later Fraina, known as Lewis Corey. In his more thoughtful utterances, Bill Haywood espoused it. The frustration at the lip service paid to it by Hillquit and the Socialist Party leadership helped precipitate the great schism of 1919. Its periodic rejection by the Leninist-controlled Communist Party in favor of the polar revolutionary strategy was a factor in numerous Communist declines. Conversely, its tacit acceptance by Communists (for their own reasons) during the 1930s helped shape the spirit of the "Red decade." Michael Harrington at times has approached many of its assumptions and observations.

This tactic recognizes the realities and potentialities in both the reformist and revolutionary approaches. If the potentials of direct democracy can only be known through participation in less-than-perfect representative institutions, it is only the creative and active pressure of large numbers of people which makes representative bodies at all re-

sponsible. In accepting the process for what it could be—and rejecting it for what it is—this tactic embraces a basic truth: a socialist strategy must balance a recognition of progress with a rejection of continuing evils in an almost nihilistic critique of existing reality.

It is wrong to assume that an ambiguous honesty is an impossible radical starting point, or that the membership of a mass movement needs the consistency of one of the two polar tactics and cannot grasp the logic of a strategy based on both confrontation and compromise. The history of the working class, the American working class in particular, is the history of a class which has cooperated with (though never fully embraced) the norms of the society it lived in. It was of course both the extraparliamentary militancy of workers and the labor legislation of the Thirties which helped forge the CIO and solidify the gains of that era. A strategy implicitly accepted can be explicitly embraced as well.

Such a strategy precludes neither third-party efforts nor work within the Democratic Party. Socialists can work as socialists within the Democratic Party; they should work toward making the Democratic Party socialist. This implies the linking of work within the party to whatever grass-roots extraparliamentary activity exists outside it. While there is compromise in working with whom one is in sharp, often profound disagreement, the resoluteness of socialists to neither hide their vision nor overestimate their real influence adds an acceptable quality to that compromise.

Furthermore, unlike others in the humanist tradition, the socialist deals not with misery and suffering per se but with these evils as the more extreme manifestations of social disunity, inequality, and wasted human potential. The protagonists in the socialist scenario are all classes below the most privileged whose abilities are exploited and underutilized and whose needs go unmet. These classes exist not only as potential coalition partners but also as diverse elements of a more unified whole. Within these classes are many who live above the level commonly understood as “misery” yet experience the frustrations, powerlessness, and alienation of modern functionalist industrialist society. It is perhaps the greatest challenge to modern socialism to cement the politics of these classes to that of the more desperate, materially wanting classes. As a matter not of tactic but of principle, the betterment of the poor should not be achieved at the expense of the unrich. With

this in mind, renewed importance can be placed on the role of organized labor.

However, the question of the socialist's relationship to the labor movement is problematic. On the one hand, there exist a large range of issues on which socialists and the organizations of labor have compatible interests, and a few on which they find themselves in lonely agreement. The prospect of common political work is hopeful. Yet, on the other hand, the internal structures of American unions (including many of the more "progressive" ones) are in constant need of reform. The labor union must often be approached with the same ambiguity used to approach the Democratic Party and the state. To the extent that the union and its elected officials are perceived by the membership as its representatives, and follow policies inspired by the workers' actual needs, socialists should have no difficulty in cooperating on matters of common concern. To the extent that unions are oligarchically structured, and to the extent that the workers perceive their union as part of that which oppresses them, a more critical approach is in order. If one goes only part of the way with Harrington in asserting the sincerity of union elites, one might conclude that they too might tolerate a strong measure of active criticism along with cooperation. However, in a land where union participation, like voting, has been transformed into a poorly watched spectator sport, socialists would make a serious error in ignoring the case for union reform. The union remains a primary means for participation, and socialists have more than a casual interest in seeing that workers' control of their unions is free and unmediated.

These last words do not presuppose the best of all conditions for social change. They recognize the many factors, both internal and external to the movement, which have affected the marginal role socialists play in American politics. While this conclusion tempers the optimism of a Debs with the more sobering realities of our day, it modifies not the substance of the vision but the pace and timing of its implementation. The writer Victor Serge has commented that "Lenin's merit consisted in being a revolutionist in time of revolution."⁷⁸ The task before the left today is quite the opposite. To be a revolutionary in a (once more) nascent phase of a movement requires more than just patience; it calls for an ever growing vision which transcends both temporary defeats and partial victories. It requires a proper appreciation of

past failures and successes and an understanding that history never repeats itself so exactly as to require the repetition of past formulas. Given the tragic history of the left, the modern-day socialist in America must too often look to the future in spite of the past, transforming mistakes, blunders, and some great moments into important learning experiences. For the foreseeable future, or at least until events dictate otherwise, much of the radical's work will be neither romantic nor adventurous. It will involve the slow grind of theoretical clarification and the short-lived excitements of daily struggle. It is to be both reformist and revolutionary—with a difference.

NOTES

1. Michael Harrington, *Fragments of a Century* (New York: Dutton, 1973), p. 66.
2. Michael Harrington, *The Other America* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962), p. 9.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
4. Harrington, *Fragments*, p. 179.
5. See *ibid.*, pp. 94–134, for Harrington's own voyage in Bohemia. One might speculate to what extent his discourse on intellectual alienation in *The Other America* is both an attempt to forge a personal tie with the materially miserable and a subtle suggestion that poverty and human suffering exist beyond absolute human misery.
6. Harrington, *The Other America*, p. 157.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 166. The Community Action Programs of the Great Society did place some emphasis on underclass participation. However, that participation was always defined by others. In short, the needs of the poor were seldom defined by the poor—with even participation coming as a gift.
9. It is perhaps unfair to say that Harrington does not concern himself with underclass consciousness in his first work. A key proposal concerns the need to reorient the understanding of the poor vis-à-vis their suffering. Yet, at least in the initial periods of a poverty program, underclass consciousness remains a passive object of policy and not a dynamic component of the process. See *ibid.*, pp. 119–35.
10. New York State and New York City politics during the Sixties are cases in point. On the state level, Nelson Rockefeller won reelection three times by forging a coalition of monied interests, suburban moderates and liberals, and the urban poor. More indicatively, John Lindsay carved out a similar top-bottom coalition in his 1965 “reform” mayoral victory over the Democrats.

His first action as mayor was to attempt a tough stand against striking subway workers—ironically, led by the once mainstay of the neo-Communist trade union left, Mike Quill.

11. Harrington, *The Other America*, p. 14.

12. Michael Harrington, *The Accidental Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 143.

13. Lyndon Johnson's memoirs offer some insight into the nature of the Great Society programs. On the one hand, there is a rhetorical attempt to define the programs as aimed at the population as a whole. However, programmatically there is no indication that the unpoor were ever seriously seen as a target group. See Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives on the Presidency 1963–1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), esp. pp. 71–77, 322–46 passim.

14. Michael Harrington, *The Twilight of Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), p. 271.

15. Harrington, *Capitalism*, p. 289.

16. See Michael Harrington, "Black and White Together: Strategy for a Movement," *Newsletter of the Democratic Left* (June 1975), for an example of his rejection of a program which places a wedge between the poor and the unpoor, and *Capitalism*, pp. 275–76.

17. Michael Harrington, *Socialism* (New York: Bantam, 1970), p. 5.

18. Michael Harrington, *Toward a Democratic Left* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 33–56.

19. Harrington, *Socialism*, p. 356.

20. See Harrington, *Democratic Left*, pp. 3–141 passim; *Socialism*, pp. 227–62; and *Capitalism*, pp. 205–312 passim.

21. Harrington, *Capitalism*, p. 223, pp. 222–23.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 264, pp. 236–64 passim.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

25. See C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), for an early and misunderstood study of the structural bias of public policy.

26. This is of course more than hinted at in Marx's famous chapter of the fetishism of commodities. Karl Marx, *Capital* (Chicago: Kerr, 1906), pp. 81–95 passim.

27. See Harrington, *Capitalism*, pp. 293–319 passim for a full exposition of this argument.

28. It need not be mentioned that the core of labor support for FDR in 1936 came from Hillquit-tutored socialists (or ex-socialists) in the needle trades who were instrumental in the formation of the American Labor Party and later the New York State Liberal Party.

29. See Max Gordon, "The Communist Party of the Nineteen Thirties and the New Left," *Socialist Revolution* 6 (January–March 1976):11–38 for a look at Communist tactics during the "Red decade."

30. Harrington, *Capitalism*, p. 305.

31. Harrington, *Socialism*, pp. 305–29.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 229–30.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 307, pp. 306–30 *passim*.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 327–28. Readers might take note that the president of the AFL-CIO was George Meany at the time Harrington wrote this comment.

42. For a critique of the American labor movement, see Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

43. Harrington, *Socialism*, p. 235.

44. Harrington argues the need to defend the Keynesian policies surrounding government aid to the cities. In 1975, he asserted that withholding aid from New York City would be a victory for reaction in a philosophical sense. President Ford "will have 'proved' that minimal decency in social life leads to financial catastrophe; he will have created a myth which will haunt and corrupt a society for at least a generation." Michael Harrington, "New York City's Cause—Our Cause," *Newsletter of the Democratic Left* (December 1975):1.

45. Harrington, *Socialism*, pp. 333–34.

46. The first half of Harrington's *Twilight of Capitalism* is a novel and ambitious investigation into many of the controversies surrounding Marxian thought. The search for the "true" Marx is an important and fascinating endeavor; its literature is deservedly large and growing. However, the present work has not developed into a study of such matters *per se* but rather into an exploration into the ideas of American socialist practitioners and the possible impact of those ideas on their politics. Therefore, to the extent that the distinction is possible, this work will focus on Harrington the socialist prognostician, strategist, and theorist and less on Harrington the academic. This approach indicates no disrespect for his scholarly genius, but a greater respect for the political task which he posits.

47. John Judis, "Democratic Socialists Move Left," *In These Times*, 28 February, 6 March 1979.

48. Harrington, *Capitalism*, p. 34.

49. Ibid., p. 92.
50. Ibid., p. 195.
51. Harrington, *Capitalism*, p. 42.
52. Ibid., pp. 32–33.
53. Ibid., p. 48.
54. Shlomo Avineri, ed., *Marx's Socialism* (New York: Lieber-Atherton, 1973), contains a series of essays outlining the controversy. Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (New York: Penguin, 1969), is a defense of more traditional interpretations of Marx which nevertheless transcends positivist interpretations and offers useful insights into the nature of the Marxian paradigm.
55. See Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Unger, 1961).
56. Harrington, *Capitalism*, pp. 149–83 passim.
57. Harrington, *Socialism*, p. 65.
58. Michael Harrington and Deborah Meir, *Theory, Life and Politics* (New York: Institute for Democratic Socialism, 1977), p. 6.
59. Harrington, *Capitalism*, p. 24.
60. Ibid., p. 30.
61. Harrington and Meir, *Theory, Life and Politics*, p. 9.
62. Harrington, *Fragments*, p. 198.
63. Harrington, *Socialism*, p. 11.
64. For Harrington's understanding of the political link between socialists and liberals, see Michael Harrington, "Socialists Examine Two Souls of Liberalism" *Newsletter of the Democratic Left* (March 1977):1.
65. Harrington, *Socialism*, p. 333.
66. Harrington, *Capitalism*, p. 179.
67. Michael Harrington, "On the 1976 Election," *Dissent* (Fall 1976):325.
68. Harrington, *Socialism*, p. 204.
69. Ibid., p. 205. See Max Shachtman, *The Bureaucratic Revolution: The Rise of the Stalinist State* (New York: Donald, 1962), for the basis and inspiration of Harrington's argument.
70. Harrington, *Socialism*, pp. 287–88.
71. Ibid., p. 295.
72. Alisdair MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 47.
73. Michael Harrington, "The Misfortune of 'Great Memories': Historical Remarks on the Paris Commune," *Dissent* (October 1971):472–77.
74. Harrington, *Democratic Left*, pp. 33–56.
75. Broadus Mitchell, *Great Economists in Their Times* (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, 1966), pp. 219–20.
76. Like many moderate American Marxists of an earlier day, Harrington balances his moderate domestic policy with support for more radical foreign socialists. He therefore looks quite favorably on French socialist moves left

and finds Eurocommunism to be a most positive development. See Michael Harrington, "François Mitterand's 'Latin Socialism,'" *Newsletter of the Democratic Left* (January 1976):3, and "Assessing Kissinger's Red Nightmare," *Newsletter of the Democratic Left* (May 1976):4.

77. Michael Harrington, "What Socialists Would Do in America, If They Could," *Dissent* (Fall 1978):440.

78. Victor Serge, *From Lenin to Stalin* (New York: Pathfinder, 1973), p. 16.

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